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An Analysis of

Nicolas Berdyaev's

Philosophy of Spirit.

John Haydn Tyers

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University of Liverpool in part fulfilment of the Modular Programme in Applied
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about the philosophy of religion. Its purpose is to find a basis for the articulation of the reality of spirit. It considers Berdyaev's philosophy of spirit, aiming to answer four questions:-

1. How did Berdyaev come to this sense of the priority of spirit?
2. How did he verbalise the reality of spirit in his philosophy?
3. Can he help us to find ways in which we and others might grow in awareness of the spiritual realm?
4. Is his philosophy still of value today?

I have surveyed Berdyaev's books as translated into English, and other relevant literature, and have attempted to present his ideas in a logical order. I offer an assessment of his philosophy, and give some account of its application to current issues.

I conclude that his existential methods are still relevant today, that any philosophy of spirit must use methods comparable to them, and that we have much to learn from both his emphasis upon the manifestation of spirit in secular life, and his questioning faith. He represents an important but often forgotten strand within Orthodoxy.

Key Words

existentialism, objectification, spirit, mysticism, freedom, personality, Kant, Orthodoxy, Russian philosophy, Paris emigres.

Declaration.

This work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any qualification or course.

PREFACE

Firstly, a note about inclusive language. Nicolas Berdyaev was writing before the emergence of our present sensitivities, and I have felt it right to make no attempt to update the quotations from him. One key word in particular has caused me some concern, the almost untranslatable *bogochelovechestvo*. Paul Valliere (2000:11ff) says that this is a compound word: *bogo* (God), *chelovech* (humanbeing), and *estvo*, which is a normalizing ending. He therefore translates it as 'the humanity of God'. I have rejected this phrase because of its clumsiness, and also because, as I understand the term, it refers both to the humanity of God and the (potential) divinity of humanity. 'Godhumanhood' seems to me to be equally inelegant, and so, despite its lack of inclusiveness, I have retained the more familiar 'Godmanhood', with all the rich associations which this word has accumulated over the years.

I am grateful to many people who have encouraged me in writing this thesis. Firstly, to the staff and my fellow students in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Chester College for giving so much stimulus and friendship. In particular, I want to thank my tutor Dr Christopher Partridge, whose infectious enthusiasm has always restored my energy. This thesis would have been much more difficult to produce without the amazing facilities of St Deiniols Library, Hawarden. The warm hospitality of Dr Peter Francis and his staff have given my wife and I great pleasure. The staff of the Shropshire County Library Service, and in particular of the Pontesbury Branch, have been most efficient in locating obscure books in forgotten corners of public libraries up and down the country. Richard Thorneycroft volunteered to do my proof reading, a much appreciated gesture, and Abbot Silouan of the Monastery of Saints Anthony and Cuthbert has both given advice and, with his small community, has made the reality of spirit manifest. Not least am I grateful for the patience, support, and love of my wife, Ruth, who, since our retirement, has found herself married to a perpetual student; I make no promise to reform my ways.

Finally, I am grateful to Nicolas Berdyaev himself. I have found him both baffling and illuminating, frustrating and inspiring. I started out with the question 'what is the spirit?' He has taught me that there is no 'the' in front of spirit. He has also shown me that probably the question has no answer, but that nevertheless there is nothing more real than concrete spirit. I hope this will all be made clear in what follows.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Those used for references to the works of Nicolas Berdyaev:-

BE	<i>The Begining and the End.</i>
CCW	<i>Christianity and Class War.</i>
DM	<i>The Destiny of Man.</i>
DH	<i>The Divine and the Human.</i>
Dost.	<i>Dostoyevsky, an Interpretation.</i>
DR	<i>Dream and Reality.</i>
EOT	<i>The End of Our Time.</i>
FS	<i>Freedom and Spirit.</i>
MCA	<i>The Meaning of the Creative Act .</i>
RS	<i>The Realm of the Spirit and the Realm of Ceaser.</i>
RI	<i>The Russian Idea.</i>
SF	<i>Slavery and Freedom.</i>
SR	<i>Spirit and Reality.</i>
SS	<i>Solitude and Society.</i>
TNE	<i>Towards a New Epoch.</i>
TR	<i>Truth and Revelation.</i>

Other Abbreviations:-

OCP	<i>Oxford Companion to Philosophy.</i>
CREP	<i>Concise Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.</i>

Biographical dates are usually taken from *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*, sixth edition, 1997.

INTRODUCTION.

The meaning of the English word 'spirit' is elusive, as elusive as the breath and the wind which are signified by the Latin *spiritus*, or the Greek πνευμα or the Hebrew *rauh*. In this dissertation, I will be using the word in a manner which is both strictly limited, but also all-embracing. I am not using 'spirit' in such senses as 'a sentient disembodied being', or of 'the spirit of a nation', or of 'the spirit of peace', although this last could indeed be a manifestation of spirit. Neither am I referring to the third person of the Trinity, to the immanent Holy Spirit, although, as we will see, it may be indistinguishable. Rather the sense which I have in mind is as in the context of 'the spiritual realm', and I am thinking of spirit as distinguished from, but not necessarily opposed to, matter. I am using it as in St John's Gospel, 'God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship him in spirit and in truth' (John 4:24). 'Spirit' is so elusive that I cannot define it more closely than that at the moment, and indeed may not succeed in being more precise by the time I finish, but I hope at least to give a flavour of its rich inclusivity.

Because of its elusiveness, although our christian gospel assumes the reality of spirit, we rarely try to explain what we mean by this term, and it seems to me that our attempts to communicate the Faith so often fall upon closed ears because our hearers do not accept our fundamental premise. We can readily accept the reality of immediate perceptable phenomena, but are not so sure about the reality of spirit (SR:1). Members of my senior generation were brought up in a culture pervaded by scientism and positivism, which left little room for spirit, whilst some young people, according to recent research, believe that the universe and the social world are essentially benign, and therefore they have no need of the resources of 'a transcendent realm... that is part and parcel of Christian religiosity' (Mayo 2003:11).

Nicolas Alexandrovich Berdyaev (1874 - 1948) was one for whom spirit was intensely real. For him 'what truly exists is spirit, conceived as a creative process' (OCP:88). Spirit is the reality from which this material world emerges, and was prior to space and time and matter. He wrote 'Spirit is not an epiphenomenon of anything, everything is an epiphenomenon of the spirit' (Macquarrie 1968: 252). Moreover, he developed a philosophy of spirit. Might this Russian Orthodox thinker, who had attempted in the first half of the last century to relate his faith to the thought of the modern world, help us to express and to share the reality of spirit in this sceptical post-modern age?

In this analysis of his philosophy of spirit there are four questions which I will ask of Berdyaev. How did he come to this sense of the priority of spirit? How did he verbalise the reality of spirit in his philosophy? Can he help us to find ways in which we

and others might grow in awareness of the spiritual realm? Is his philosophy still of value today?

1. HOW DID BERDYAEV COME TO HIS SENSE OF THE PRIORITY OF SPIRIT?

BERDYAEV'S SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT.

'Our faith, and the way we express it, will be shaped by the way in which we have come to faith' (FS:vii). So I begin by exploring Berdyaev's own personal journey, trying to identify some of the factors which shaped his sense of the priority of spirit.

A member of the Russian *intelligenty*.

Nicolas Alexandrovich was born into a noble family, whose home was in Kiev, and he never lost his aristocratic attitudes. He had been a lonely child, saying of himself that he did not feel that he belonged to this earth or family (DR:2). Although he was baptised as an Orthodox, his immediate family, like many others at that time, played no part in the life of the church. However, he had a natural awareness of spiritual realities. He tells Mrs K., an agnostic with whom he had a long correspondence, 'From childhood there has been in me an absolute feeling of the reality of another spiritual world, a world invisible' (quoted Lowrie 1960:233). His father's extensive library fired an enthusiasm for the writings of the key philosophers, and he decided to become one himself.

In his late teens, he went through what he calls his 'first conversion', to a search for the meaning of life, orientated towards spirit and spirituality, but, he says, not to creed.

Henceforth I was convinced that there is no religion above Truth ... and this awareness of this supremacy of Truth has put a living stamp on my spiritual and intellectual development. This 'spiritualism' became the ground and frame of my whole philosophical attitude, and probably my very existence (DR:79).

In his early twenties, there came a second conversion - this time to socialism, the domain of revolution, marxism and idealism (op. cit.:108). He became one of the *intelligenty*, who in the later years of the nineteenth century and the period leading up to the Revolution of 1917, played a vital role in Russia's cultural and political life. Frederick C. Copleston (1907-93) describes them as being not so much intellectuals, as a group who were committed to championing the oppressed, the peasantry, who had no voice of their own. They subordinated all other interests to their socio-political goals, and, whatever moralists might say, were prepared to use any means to achieve it. They rejected the Orthodox church which was closely identified with the reactionary Tsarist regime, and whose clergy were badly educated. Drawn from the nascent middle class, sons of Orthodox priests, doctors, merchants and petty officials, their inspiration was the

writings of Karl Marx (1988:xf,3). However, Berdyaev differed from his contemporaries in one particular; he did not lose his spiritual awareness, looking for a spiritual rather than a political revolution.

His Marxist activities whilst a student at the University of Kiev, led to his exile in 1898 to Vologda. Three years later, he studied at Heidelberg (Terras 1985:48), and after his return, and marriage to Lydia Troucheva in 1904, he moved to St Petersburg, to find himself part of an exciting cultural revolution.

The Russian religious renaissance.

Nicolas Zernov describes how in the early years of the last century, there was amongst the Russian intelligentsia a religious and artistic revival, which led to its members revising their 'previous negative attitude to Christianity' and to their recognition of 'the intrinsic value of the Orthodox Church' (Nucho 1967:189). Berdyaev recalls

Only those who themselves lived through that time know what a creative inspiration was experienced amongst us, and how the breath of the spirit took possession of Russian souls' (RI:219).

A circle of young intellectuals formed themselves around the novelist Dimitri Merezhkovsky (1865-1941), and his wife Zinaida Hippus. Berdyaev describes Merezhkovsky as a man of letters, who rediscovered the importance of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, and produced important criticisms of their work (op. cit.:224). These young minds shared in an intense religious enquiry, exploring mysticism and the occult (ibid.). Materialism, positivism and utilitarianism were rejected, to be replaced by the German idealists, Kant, Hegel and Schelling, and by Nietzsche, seen as a mystic (op cit:221 & 224), and they rediscovered the Russian philosophers Khomyakov, Dostoyevsky and Solovyëv. Dimitri and Zinaida attempted a synthesis of Christianity and paganism, but Berdyaev quickly became disillusioned with their bizarre rituals. He also moved on from German idealism, which seemed to him to deny the value of the individual person.

One of the circle was Sergi Bulgakov (1871-1944). After some mystical experiences, he had already become an Orthodox believer (Barnford 1993:viii), and with his help, Nicolas Alexandrovich began to move in the same direction. So by 1907, Berdyaev is writing to a friend,

The sacraments are the very essence of life, the joy of religious being.....I thirst for the religious cult and at times I would like to enter some church, (and) be openly and organically joined with the life of thousands of years (Lowrie 1960:97).

His incorporation into the church happened the following year after his move to Moscow, where for the first time in his life he experienced 'the ancient traditions of Russia and the patriarchal life of the venerable city', with the beautiful and colourful ritual and moving music of the Orthodox church (Lowrie 1965:19).

Other who became members of the church at that time included Peter Struve (1870-1944) and Seryon Frank (1877-1950) (Zernov 1983: 32). They received a mixed welcome, because, as Paul Valliere writes,

the intelligentsia did not arrive at the household of faith with empty bags, but brought a load of liberal and reformist values which they had no intention of surrendering (2000:243).

They were irritants within this conservative body, urging its reform.

Eight of them, including Berdyaev, Bulgakov and other 'legal Marxists', published in 1909 a book entitled *Vekhi*, (*Landmarks*), in which 'they predicted the reign of terror which would follow the victory of the revolutionaries' (Zernov 1976:317), and pleaded for the priority of moral and spiritual values, and of the freedom of the human person. They were largely ignored, but their worst fears were confirmed in the years following 1917 (Coplestone 1988:18ff).

An emigré in Paris.

After the 1917 Revolution, Berdyaev was made Professor of Philosophy at Moscow University in 1920, but in the next two years his criticisms of the authorities were so strident that he, his wife and his sister-in-law were expelled from the country along with another hundred intellectuals. In 1924, they arrived in Paris, to become part of the vibrant community of the tens of thousands of Russian refugees who were already there (Binns 2002:88).

He found himself reunited with some of his companions of the Renaissance. They established the Theological College of St Sergius in 1925, and here a distinctive theological/philosophical tradition emerged, which, fed by a rich liturgical life, combined a study of the Church Fathers with nineteenth century Russian speculative philosophy, and an openness to the West (ibid). Nicolas Zernov regards this as the first real contact between the Russian Church and its Western brothers and sisters in a thousand years, and the church in exile came to play an important part in the emerging oecumenical movement (1978:173). Most of Berdyaev's mature books were written in Paris, and published in Russian by the American sponsored 'YMCA Press'. Some twenty were translated into English, making him in the West probably the most widely read of the Russian philosophers. After his death, he was one of the authors who inspired the catacomb church in Russia during the Soviet period (Ellis 1986:317 & 386); in particular his writings helped to shape the teaching of the reforming priest Alexander Men, assassinated in 1990 (Roberts 1996:24).

Berdyaev remained an unorthodox, but praying and worshipping, Orthodox, loyal to the Moscow Patriarchate, surviving the privations of the German occupation, and dying in Paris in 1948 (Lowrie 1960:138).

RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY.

Berdyaev's natural spiritual awareness flowered within an Orthodoxy which has been 'the very breath of Russian life', and 'the very spirit and soul of Russia' (Zander 1973:148), despite having been treated throughout the nineteenth century by the intelligentsia with indifference. Indeed, Bulgakov said, 'Pushkin did not know St Seraphim; St Seraphim did not know Puskin, although they lived at the same time' (op. cit.:154). I suggest that there are five aspects of Orthodox teaching and practice which are particularly significant in the development of Berdyaev's philosophy.

The first concerns the relationship between the material and the spiritual. Zernov writes,

In the West, body and spirit are clearly distinguished, and there is a tendency to set them in opposition to each other; in the Christian East, they are treated as interdependant parts of the same creation (1942:39).

For example, Western scholastic theology, according to Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983), regards matter as being fundamentally changed when blessed in the liturgical sacraments, to become almost a new *sui generis* reality by the infusion of divine grace. In Orthodox thought, the sacramental use of these elements does not in any way change them, but rather reveals their true ongoing nature: they are already infused with the divine nature of God (1987:32f). Therefore Orthodoxy can speak of the *sacramentality* of creation itself, and it is perhaps easier for an Eastern Christian to be aware of the spiritual nature of all reality than for his Western sister.

Secondly, East and West have a different emphasis in their views about human nature. The West tends to take a pessimistic view; the sin of Adam has destroyed the image of God in man, and we all inherit his guilt. The Eastern church, whilst stressing the need for repentance, is more optimistic. A tendency to sin has become hereditary, and we all bear responsibility for turning away from God. However, we are not guilty of Adam's sin, but only our own, and the image of God remains in us, even though the likeness may have been lost. Contrary to Augustine, Orthodoxy teaches that man is not totally depraved, but still has free will, and is able to respond to the divine call (Alfeyev 2002:71; Ware 1963:228). Berdyaev summarise this teaching as follows:- a. The Divine image and likeness is in man, and he is created as a spiritual being. b. The Fall does not destroy but damages this image, which is therefore dimmed. c. Man is not just in Old Adam, but also in the New Adam of Christ, the God-man, and so through grace can grow again into that image (DM:69). As we will see, this Orthodox insight was developed by Solovyev into his concept of Godmanhood.

Thirdly, 'in the West, the individual occupies the centre of attention; in the East he is always seen as a member of community' (Zernov *ibid*). It is within the community that our personalities reach their fullest realisation. Further, it is in this unity that the Divine truth is revealed, rather than in the individual or in the hierarchy. It is revealed not as intellectual knowledge, but as existential truth experienced within the life of the church. 'To live in union with the Church is to live in the truth, and to live in union with the truth is to live in union with the Church' (Bulgakov 1935:79). Further, in Orthodoxy the idea of individual salvation is impossible; 'salvation is corporate ...all are answerable for all' (RI:200), and we are guilty if we do not work to prevent our neighbour from going to hell. Further, it is not just mankind who is to be saved; through mankind's conscious faith and obedience, the whole cosmos will be brought into perfect union with the God who brought it into being (Lossky 1957:101 & 110). This corporateness is expressed by the word 'sobornost', a word to which we will return.

Next, there is a different view of dogma. Zernov claims that the West likes

clear, precise formulae; it is logical and analytical.....The East treats religion more as a life than a doctrine....It believes that the Church and its sacraments are divine mysteries, intelligible and morally stimulating to those who partake of them; but that they will always evade analysis by logical reasoning, since this function cannot penetrate into the depths of the relations between God and man (*ibid.*).

This does not mean that dogma is unimportant; indeed Berdyaev points out that the dogmas were developed largely by the eastern teachers of the Church (RI: 272). However, 'Dogma cannot be understood apart from experience; the fullness of experience cannot be had apart from true doctrine' (Lossky 1957:236). Dogmas are kept to a minimum (Bulgakov 1935:81), and individual members of the Church are encouraged to follow their personal search for the truth, but in fellowship with and subordination to the whole. So there is a great freedom to express theological opinions, and theologians have plenty of room to be creative. O. F. Clarke, who knew him personally, said, 'Berdyaev was an intrepid creative thinker, only possible in Orthodoxy' (1950:21).

Finally, the Orthodox way is mystical, 'less of "this world" than that of the Christianity of the West ... more contemplative' (Bulgakov *op cit*:175). John Meyendorff has written:-

To the Western mind, mysticism is associated with forms of subjective, individual and necessarily esoteric knowledge, which, by definition, cannot be communicated to all. In early Christian and Byzantine Greek meanwhile, the term "mystical" is applied to forms of perception related to the Christian "mystery"; the text of the Eucharistic Prayer, for example, is frequently described as "mystical". Whereas saints

possess this "mystical" perception in an eminent way because they have attuned themselves to the gift of grace, all Christians are equally the recipients of the grace itself and are therefore called, by imitating the saints, to acquire and develop the "mystical knowledge" (Malherbe 1978: xiif).

So the Russian people are nourished, Berdyaev says, 'not by sermon and doctrinal teaching, but by liturgical worship, and the tradition of Christian kindness' (RI:217). As we will see, mysticism in plays an important part in Berdyaev's thought.

RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHY.

Berdyaev's sense of the priority of spirit was encouraged by certain aspects of the distinctive Russian philosophical tradition. Cut off from the ferment of the Renaissance and of the Enlightenment whilst under the Mongol yoke (Kelly 2000:783), it was not 'until the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-96) that Enlightenment ideas filtered into Russia'. Thereafter, philosophy flourished not as an academic discipline as in the West, 'but in the intelligentsia's passionate debates about the liberation of humanity and the destiny of Russia, conducted in political and religious writings' (Bakhurst 1995:785). In particular, a distinctive group of religious philosophers emerged, of whom it has been written, 'to abstract knowledge they opposed religious experience, to the primacy of gnoseology, the reality of the spiritual; to the self-satisfaction and pride of intellect, the humility of the mind which acknowledges its limitations and fallibility' That is, they emphasised 'the primacy of the spiritual' (Zander 1973:152f). The distinctive character of this philosophy can be seen in the work of three writers, all laymen, who, according to Zernov, prepared the way for the twentieth century religious renaissance (1983:32).

The first is Alexy Stepanovitch Khomyakov (1804-1860). He was the most prominent of the Slavophiles, believing that the mission of the Russian people to become, not the wealthiest, but the most Christian of nations, through the recognition and expression of 'all the spiritual forces and principles that lie at the basis of Holy Orthodox Russia' (Lossky 1952:40). He was a cavalry officer who left a literary heritage of poems, tragedies, political and religious-philosophical articles, and a landowner who looked forward to the freeing of the serfs, which happened a year after his death.

Two aspects of his teaching are especially relevant to our study. The first is his concept of 'faith'. For him, knowledge is knowing the 'living truth', which is 'inward' and 'immediate', 'whereby we distinguish reality from its subjective

representation, an object from the idea of an object' (Nichols 1989:19). This kind of truth, especially Divine truth, is known by 'faith', by which he means intuition, the faculty of immediately cognizing actual living reality, things in themselves. A wholeness of reason is achieved when there is harmony between the infinite wealth 'of data acquired through (faith's) insight' and its analysis by understanding. We will find echos of this approach in Berdyaev's epistemology.

Secondly, Khomyakov developed the idea of *sobornost*. This word comes from the Slavonic root *sobirat*, meaning to reunite and to assemble, and is used in old Slavonic to translate 'catholic' (Bulgakov 1935: 74f). According to N. O. Lossky (1952:42), in Khomyakov's writings it means 'the combination in freedom and unity of many persons on the basis on their common love for the same absolute values.' It ties in with Khomyakov's conception of the church as an organic whole, the spiritual body of Christ into which we are incorporated. As the matter which we absorb into our own bodies is transformed to become part of us, 'receiving new life and meaning', so each individual is transformed in becoming part of the Church, the Body of Christ, 'the organic basis of which is Love' (op. cit.:34). As Berdyaev, for whom this becomes a key concept, expressed it, '*Sobornost* is not collectivity; it is a quality of the communion of men, of personalities'. Together, they form a 'WE', the *sobornost*, which means 'their penetration by spirituality, their entry upon the spiritual plane of being' (Lowry 1965 p 268).

I turn now to Fëdor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky (1821-81). He wrote modestly of himself, 'I am rather weak in philosophy, but not in my love for philosophy, which is strong' (quoted in Dost.:35), although Berdyaev said, 'Dostoyevsky is drunk with ideas'. His heroes, such as Raskolnikov and Ivan Karamazov, are people 'as it were submerged by ideas, and 'only open their mouths to develop their ideological dialectic' (op. cit.:34f). I will refer to two aspects of Dostoyevsky's writing which helped to form Berdyaev's philosophy.

Firstly, Berdyaev claims that Dostoyevsky, along with Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, inaugurated a new era in the understanding of man (RI p 179), and wrote about what were to become the major concerns of existential philosophy. His work emerges from within his own inner life, giving voice to all the doubts and contradictions of his own mind, knowing about mankind in general because he knew himself so well (Dost:31f). In his graphic descriptions of nineteenth century Russia, man holds centre stage, and 'is no longer treated as a superficial creature but is followed into his....spiritual depths' (Dost.:28). He is a writer who knows man to be a 'two minded, self-contradictory tragic creature, unhappy, suffering, and in love with suffering', in whom resides a fourth dimension, namely his orientation towards the ultimate (RI:179,202).

Secondly, Dostoyevsky explores the concept of freedom. Man is born to be free, which is his highest dignity and his likeness to God. But this freedom often results in wilfulness, which leads to evil. Freedom and suffering go together; indeed he considers suffering to be the sole cause of the awakening of conscious thought (RI:179f). Freedom is explored in a famous chapter in *The Brothers Karimozov* to which Berdyaev was to return again and again, the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor (Book V chapter 5). Christ is pictured as having returned to earth in fifteenth century Spain, and is arrested. The Inquisitor reminds him of His three 'temptations' in the wilderness, which become for Dostoyevsky, three proclamations of the truth about human nature. Christ had refused to turn the stones into bread, because he knew that people would say 'Enslave us if you will, but feed us'. He had refused to force people to bow down before him, because he knew that people would rather worship what everyone else worships than freely choose for themselves. Christ had refused to compel faith by working miracles, leaving people free to go through moments of

the most terrible fundamental and tormenting spiritual questions, with only a free decision of the heart..... There is nothing more seductive for man than the freedom of his conscience, but there is nothing more tormenting for him, either.

Christ's crime, according to the Inquisitor, is to have increased man's burden of freedom. The Kingdom of Heaven comes when man embraces this burden gladly (McDuff 1993:291ff).

Berdyaev recalls,

The *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, in particular, made such an impression on my young mind that when I turned to Jesus Christ for the first time I saw him under the appearance that he bears in the Legend (Dost:7).

Our third thinker is Vladimir S. Solovyev (1853-1900), who was the first significant Russian academic philosopher, and who created an original systematic religious philosophy (Lossky 1952:133). A close friend of Dostoyevsky, 'in him was blended, strangely but inextricably the qualities of priest, poet, prophet and philosopher, seer and sage', who regarded his task as being the transformation of the world through philosophy. Living a simple life, giving away everything that he had, he exhibited the serene happiness of the true saint and ascetic, sharing joy wherever he went (Munzer 1956:1f,45).

It was his development of the Orthodox understanding of human nature, in his lectures on 'Godmanhood' at St Petersburg in 1878, which first brought Solovyev to the notice of a wider public. For him, the central event in world history was the coming of Christ, in whose person was the perfect union between the two natures, divine and human, between the uncreated and the created, between the unconditioned

and the conditioned. Christ is the God-man, whose coming in the flesh affects the whole of the created order, inaugurating a cosmogenic process through which all humankind and the whole created order is drawn into the divine. So he raises the doctrine of the two natures, promulgated by the Council of Nicea, to the status of a philosophical principle embracing the whole of existence. He gave to this process the name *bogochelovechestvo*, clumsily translated as 'Godmanhood', denoting the principle of God united with humanity. As created creators, as 'God-humanity', our act of freely choosing to realise our Godmanhood is itself a creative moment, bringing together all aspects of our lives, religious, aesthetic and scientific. The opposite is 'Man-god', humanism, which makes man the measure of all things, excluding God. The idea of Godmanhood become central to Berdyaev's philosophy (RI:97, 172f; Roberts 1996:23f; OCP:320).

Slovyev saw the need for an interpretation of the world, human history and life in the light of the Christian faith, which would connect with those who assumed that religion and science were opposed, that there were no absolute values, and that metaphysical speculation was a waste of time (Copleston 1988:11). Learning from German idealism to see the development of the world as a progression from an initial unity, through differentiation, towards a higher integration, he worked to create an all embracing theory of apprehension, which combined empiricism, rationalism and mysticism. He idealistically expected this integration of thought to find expression in the unity of all mankind, and thought that the Russian people had a special role in working towards this coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, a theocratic utopia, when all churches and nations would be united together under the Roman Pope and the Russian Tsar. Indeed, he actively worked, unsuccessfully, for the healing of the great schism between East and West.

Berdyaev and the religious thinkers of his generation consciously worked to further Slovyev's great philosophical project.

WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Russian philosophy then developed into a distinctive tradition, rooted in Orthodoxy, and conscious of the destiny of the Russian nation. Never-the-less, it is true to say that 'philosophy in Russia was derivative, dependent.....on Western influences' (Copleston1986:1). Berdyaev was immersed in European thought from his teenage, and I want now to consider two of the many Western philosophers to whom he is indebted.

He declared, 'My true master in philosophy was Kant' (Nucho 1967:40).

Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804) was the principal Enlightenment thinker, whose impact upon Western thought was immense. He aimed to retain God, soul, immortality, freedom, moral value and the supra-sensory world, which some of his predecessors seemed to have thrown out (Hirschberger 1976:132). The problem he set out to solve was 'What can we know?', or, as he put it, 'The main question is always what and how much understanding and reason can know independently of experience' (op cit:133). He accepted that the raw material for our knowledge is the vast quantities of information which we receive through our senses in a shapeless and chaotic form. It arrives in our consciousness in the form of predicates of the object - colour, taste, sound, mass. Kant suggested that we give the information order by the a priori forms of space and time, which he called transcendentals, and which already existed in our minds. Therefore, our experience of the object is dependent 'upon the nature of our observational faculty', and not only upon the object itself. So the focus of knowledge moves from the object being observed to the mind of the observer. He regarded his realization of this truth as his 'Copernican revolution' (op cit:135).

So, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant differentiated between 'noumena' and 'phenomena'. Noumena are things as they are in themselves, phenomena are things as we perceive them. For Kant, as for Hume before him, there is no logical guarantee that what we experience truly represents the object at all.

That it can be said of many of the predicates of outer things, without detriment to their real existence, that they belong not to these things in themselves but only to their appearances and have no existence of their own outside our representations ... (Kant, quoted Flew 1971:348f).

Although the presence of the object occasions our mental perceptions, it does not determine them. 'All our experience begins with the senses, passes to understanding and ends with reason' (Kant, quoted Hirschberger 1976:139). So 'the truly real world (things in themselves) is unknowable' (op cit.:135).

Further, Kant would only allow sense-data to be the raw material of knowledge. So, even though 'God is not fiction - He is the realest being', because we cannot experience Him with our senses, we can enjoy no direct perception of Him, and he too must remain for ever unknowable (op. cit.:139). However, Berdyaev disagrees. Following Khomyakov, he thought that we can know God and the real world, by faith, by inner perception, by intuition. Indeed, it is this intuitive knowledge which is primary.

Kant has important things to say about human freedom. Man is not merely the product of nature, but is the author of his own actions. Kant said, 'Freedom in the practical sense is the independence of the will of coercion by sensuous impulses' (Nucho 1965:42). So freedom is man's power of self determination; it is the will of rational beings and their ability to operate without external causes. This is distinct

from the causes found in natural science, in the world of physical phenomena, in which the actions of irrational beings reflect the working of physical necessity, of cause and effect (op. cit.:43). Rational will has the power to legislate for itself, to make its own decisions. To quote Kant again, 'What else then can freedom of will be, but autonomy, that is the property of the will to be a law to itself?' (ibid). Further, we are free not only from nature, but also from external supernatural powers and moral law, although we freely choose to obey the moral law, motivated by reverence for this law itself; 'a free will and a will subject to moral laws are one and the same'. Wilhelm Windelband summarises this aspect of Kant's moral philosophy as follows,

Reverence for the worth of man is for Kant the material principle of moral science. Man should do his duty not for the sake of advantage, but out of reverence for himself, and in his intercourse with his fellow-man he should make it his supreme maxim, never to treat him as a mere means for the attainment of his own ends, but always to honour in him the worth of personality (quoted op. cit:44).

Berdyaev wrote:-

I feel a special affinity with the dualism of Kant, with his distinction between the realm of freedom and the realm of nature, with his doctrine of freedom as of a character which is apprehended by the mind, with the Kantian doctrine of the will, with his view of the world of phenomena as distinct from the real world (ibid, quoting from SF:12).

Sören Kierkegaard (1813-55) is mentioned only a few times in Berdyaev's writings, but Fuad Nuchio suspects that his influence was greater than Berdyaev realised (1965:43). Kierkegaard's central thought

is his master category of *the individual*. All of his thought had to pass through the needle's eye of whether or not it compelled men to face their sovereign responsibility as individuals (Douglas V. Steere, quoted Carnell 1965:28).

For him, nothing was to come in the way of the individual exercising his freedom of choice. In saying this, he was reacting to Hegel's philosophy. Exploiting the double meaning of the German word *Geist* as both 'spirit' and 'mind', Hegel considered the universal *Geist*, the Absolute Mind, to be 'the whole of things, conceived as a unity, as spiritual, as selfknowing', which realised itself through individual human minds as they developed and came to know themselves and to know *Geist* (OCP:342). The individual therefore becomes merely the self-expression of the Absolute Mind, of no intrinsic worth in herself. For Kierkegaard, and for Berdyaev after him, this failed to do justice to the value of the human person, and takes away the possibility of personal spirituality, and of a personal relationship between men and God (SR:27). So Kierkegaard wrote,

Hegel makes men into heathens, *into a race of animals gifted with reason*it is the peculiarity of the human race that just because the individual is created in the image of God, "the individual" is above the race (Carnell 1965:26).

Contrary to Hegel's insistence that ethical questions should be resolved in a calm, rational, objective manner (OCP:342), Kierkegaard was aware of the deep emotions involved in finding solutions to our personal ethical dilemmas. He wrote 'it is impossible to exist without passion' (quoted op cit:259), because it is as we make long-term choices, such as whether or not to get married, decisions which arouse deep feelings, that we gain a sense of our own identity, and become an 'existing individual'. (He had broken off his own engagement when the realization of the responsibility which he was accepting gripped him with a sense of incapacitating fear or dread (Carnell 1965:22)).

He used a word which is the same in both Danish and German - *Existenz*, to denote 'a mode of being that is distinctive of human life' (OCP:258). Other things 'are', they have being; only humans 'exist'. We are subject, not object; we know and are known 'existentially', not by rational thought, but with the whole of our being.

Kierkegaard's writings were largely ignored until the twentieth century, when there emerged a way of doing philosophy which was given the name 'Existentialism' by the French Christian philosopher Gabriel Marcel (1889 - 1973). John Macquarrie explains that existentialists begin from man rather than nature, man as an existent in the whole range of existing; not man as thinker only, but as an initiator of action and as a centre of feeling. Existentialism is not anti-intellectual, but, quoting the Spanish catholic Miguel de Unamuno, regards philosophy as

a product of the humanity of each philosopher, and each philosopher is a man of flesh and bone who addresses himself to other men of flesh and bone like himself. And, let him do what he will, he philosophises not with the reason only, but with the will, with the feelings, with the flesh and with the bones, with the whole soul and with the whole body. It is the man that philosophises (Macquarrie 1973:2f).

These words well describe Berdyaev's way of philosophising. Russian philosophy, he thought, was especially amenable to the existential approach.

SUMMARY.

So Nicolas Berdyaev was a person who was gifted with a natural awareness of spiritual realities, and who eventually found in Orthodoxy an atmosphere in which this could flourish. He entered into a philosophical tradition which was attempting to develop an integrated view of the world, uniting both the material and spiritual. In certain aspects of Western philosophy, he was able to find both a method and a language enabled him to verbalise his sense of the priority of spirit, and we will now consider how he did this.

II. HOW DID BERDYAEV VERBALISE THE REALITY OF SPIRIT IN HIS PHILOSOPHY?

We usually define words in terms of other words: so a table is 'a piece of furniture with a flat top supported by one or more upright legs' (Longmans Dictionary of Contemporary English). But there are some words which we cannot define in terms of anything else; thus, we can only explain what we mean by the simple word 'blue' by pointing to examples; 'this is a blue dress, this is a blue sky' (OCP:182). For Berdyaev, 'spirit' is such a word. 'What is spirit?' is a meaningless question, because it assumes that we can define it in terms of other things, and, as we will see, spirit is not a thing. What we can do is to point to examples of the manifestation of spirit, and so gradually build up an understanding of what the word signifies. Therefore, in the analysis of his philosophy of spirit which follows, we firstly consider the human person, the existent who is the clearest expression of spirit. Next, we explore Berdyaev's understanding of knowledge and of how it is acquired, which for him is a profoundly spiritual activity. Finally, we consider the relationships between spirit and the world of time and space, and between spirit and God.

THE HUMAN PERSON

Although as we will see, spirit is manifested in the whole of the natural order, it is most clearly revealed in the human person, and through the multi-faceted personal and communal life of humanity. 'Spirit affirms its reality through man, who is the manifestation of spirit' (SR:14). 'The key to reality is to be found in man' (DM:59). 'Man is where two spheres intersect. I am both spiritual and natural man'. (FS:27). 'Spirit is the reality revealed in and through the existential subject' (SR:9).

Berdyaev's philosophy of spirit is therefore rightly called 'existential', because it focuses upon the human being, the existent. His view of human nature is also deeply Orthodox, growing out of Solovyev's teaching on Godmanhood. Indeed, he says that Christian anthropology should embrace the concept of man as 'creator who bears the image and likeness of the Creator of the World'. Because manhood is Godmanhood, true human-ness is likeness to God, and when he fails to be like God, man is not being true to his nature' (DH:110f).

Personality.

The mystery of human personality is a key concept for Berdyaev, and 'the fundamental problem of Existential philosophy' (SS:159). As any one who has had the privilege of bringing up children will know, personality is something which is given, it

is there from birth. Berdyaev explains this givenness by saying that personality is of spirit, rather than of the world of natural things (SS:162); it is created by God, God's idea and conception, a direct expression of spirit on man's physical and psychical nature (DM:71; SS:160). It is

not born of a father and a mother, it emanates from God, and makes its appearance from another world ... When a person enters the world....then the world process is broken into and compelled to change its course (SF:36;21).

Berdyaev says that it is the personality which is the image and likeness of God, and which is the bearer of supra-personal values, (I assume he means our innate moral and aesthetic values), which show its relationship to the Higher Power, and which are the source of its wholeness (SS:160).

Kierkegaard had spoken of 'individuals'. Berdyaev chooses not to use this term, because it can be applied also to animals, plants and inanimate objects, and when referring to man it emphasises that he is part of the determinate biological process. As individuals, we share family likenesses and common histories, traditions and culture; we are shaped by both nature and nurture; in contrast, a human's personality is most clearly expressed in the qualities which are uniquely hers, never to be repeated in anyone else (SF:22,35; DM:71; SS:160). There appears to be an inconsistency here - our personality is revealed by our individuality! Berdyaev's point remains though; the term 'personality' can only properly be applied to a human being.

Although given before birth in Berdyaev's view, personality is also a 'task to be achieved', to be developed over the years. Because it is of spirit and not of nature, the person exercises freedom in, and so is to some degree responsible for, the realisation of the person whom he is destined to be. Berdyaev thinks that personhood is only realised by freeing oneself from the role imposed by society, and by insisting on being oneself. This is a painful process, involving 'conflict with the enslaving power of the world', because personality can be crushed by social conditions; acquiescence reduces the suffering, but prevents the growth of the person. Further, because man is the point of the intersection of two worlds, it is within him that there takes place 'the conflict between spirit and nature, freedom and necessity, independence and dependence'. So 'pain in the human world is the birth of personality' - a favourite theme in Dostoyevsky. Personality then develops as life goes on - it is 'biography' and 'history'. (SS:163ff; SF:22,26,36; DM:71,73f).

This growth of personality only happens because of the existence of, and in inter-action with, other personalities, parents, family and community. This is another reason for Berdyaev's rejection of 'individual' - we cannot exist on our own. Personality is most fully revealed in love, which is 'its faithful mirror', and is to some extent veiled from those who are not lovers. To be in love with another is to perceive the identity and

unity underlying change; to see what others do not see. Being loved gives a sense of self fulfilment, it is the overcoming of isolation, and the experience of communion. We are invited not just to love a person's abstract qualities, such as goodness, or to love mankind as a whole, but rather to love the concrete human person; this is true personalism (SS:165;195f).

Personality is expressed through the whole person. Created in spirit, it is expressed through the body, not least through the face. For Berdyaev, this is 'the most amazing thing in the world.....through the face we apprehend, not the bodily life of man, but the life of his soul'. So the body also 'belongs to the image of man', and personalism therefore recognises the dignity and rights of the body, ruling out its wrong treatment. There is no dualism here; spirit is not distinct from the body - it includes the physical in itself, spiritualizes it, and communicates another quality to it. Personality is the continuity which exists through all the physical changes in the cells of the body (SF:30ff).

I find Berdyaev's ideas about personality rather problematic. His concept of the pre-existence of personality is not one generally accepted within the Christian faith. Although Berdyaev might claim support from Jeremiah 1.5 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart...', I would argue that this verse refers to foreknowledge, rather than pre-existence. Our personality begins to come into being at our conception, and is related in some way to our unique collection of genes; however, I agree that personality is not defined by them, and has an elusive quality which points beyond this physical realm.

Tragedy.

Many people in the aftermath of the horror and senselessness of the First World War had a deep sense of the tragic nature of human life. Whereas this convinced the atheistic existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80) that existence was meaningless, (TR:108), it was for the believer Berdyaev a sign of the reality of spirit. He considers that this tragic element has two sources. Firstly, if we accept the concept of Godmanhood, man is both creature and divine. As a creature, his

continued existence depends upon the (natural) world, and he perishes in the world and by the action of the world. The world nourishes man, and it destroys him.

As divine, man is always reaching beyond this world

to break through darkness towards the light, through what is meaningless towards meaning, to break through the servitude which necessity imposes upon freedom.

This astonishing aspiration, and the ability to recognise light, meaning and freedom when he finds them, shows that humankind does not belong solely to nature, but that he is spirit also (BE:3f).

Secondly, there is in man's fallenness, a tension between being made in God's image, and the failure to show God's likeness. He is

God-like and beast like, exalted and base, free and enslaved, apt both for rising and for falling, capable of great love and sacrifice, capable of great cruelty and unlimited egoism. (He bears) the impress of his Fall,but he suffers as a result of this Fall and he desires to get the better of it (SF:20).

In both cases, man's tragic nature

bears witness to the existence of a higher world.....Man is discontented with himself and capable of out growing himself.....The very fact of the existence of man is a break in the natural world and proves that nature cannot be self-sufficient but rests upon a supernatural reality (DM:60).

Freedom

Part of being human, of personhood, is the privilege and, as in Dostoyevsky, the burden of freedom, of having to make choices. This also is a pointer to our spiritual nature. A key theme in all existential philosophy, it is especially so in Berdyaev, who calls himself a 'Philosopher of Freedom' (DR:46), John Macquarrie points out that traditional arguments about freedom of the will tended to treat it as an object which could be perceived, investigated, and either proved or disproved from the outside - it was objectified. For Berdyaev and other existentialists, it is not to be proved but is rather 'a postulate of action' - a condition of our existing. It is 'noetic', 'a something rather than a nothing, a possibility rather than an actuality....not grasped by thought but known only through the exercise of freedom' (1973:139).

Berdyaev insists that freedom is not to be identified with free will, but concerns our whole being. Just as for Kant man is the author of his own actions, not merely the product of nature, so for Berdyaev freedom is man's 'self-determination in the inmost depths of being and is opposed to every kind of external determination' (FS:123). So freedom is the spirit as self determined, not given by physiological or psychological factors, but the result of the spirit alone (Copleston 1986:379).

He goes beyond Kant, in claiming that we are not just free to choose to obey the given Moral Law, but we create our own norms.

Freedom is first and foremost my independence, determination from within and creative initiative.....it is not a mere choice between good and evil standing over against me - rather freedom is my own norm and my own creation of good and evil (DR:52).

And again,

"Spirit" is freedom unconstrained by the outward and the objective, (it is) where what is deep and inward determines all (FS:117).

So moral decisions, for example about relationships between the sexes, are made, not by following social convention or in accordance with some external moral code, but from

the individual's own lived experience and sense of responsibility. (TNE:34).

There are two stages of freedom. The second of these is the freedom which comes through knowledge, freedom which is the gift of Truth, (John 8.32), 'the intelligent freedom which is our final liberty in truth and goodness' (FS:125). The more I learn about the world and about myself, the more I recognise the forces of nature, the pressure of society, and my own internal psychological constraints, the more I become capable of making free decisions. of overcoming the pressures of objectified nature and of society and being myself. This is the highest kind of freedom, one into which we hopefully grow as life proceeds. This is the stage which is usually discussed by philosophers.

But there is a first stage, an initial and irrational liberty which is prior to good and evil, which is our freedom to choose or to reject freedom and truth in the first place. This freedom

is the mysterious source of life, the basic and original experience, the abyss which is deeper than being itself and by which being is determined. Man feels within himself this irrational and unfathomable freedom in the very fibre of his being (FS:126).

What is the source of this initial freedom? It cannot be the natural world, because this is determined by its own laws; indeed, Berdyaev often contrasts the determinism of the material world with the freedom of spirit. Freedom therefore cannot emerge in the course of evolution, and man is not free merely because he is a more highly developed species. Rather, it must be 'discovered and revealed in the experience of the spiritual life, for it is impossible to demonstrate it or deduce its existence from the nature of things' (FS:117). Again, 'if one does not derive freedom from nature, one must admit that it presupposes the existence of a spiritual principle in man' (TNE:99). Berdyaev suggests two sources of freedom. Firstly, he links freedom back to Jacob Boehme's conception of *Ungrund*, 'the primordial void, preceeding both Creator and creation, and hence impenetrable even to God' (Nichols 1989:144), which yet is full of possibilities, including both good and evil, and in which nothing is yet determined. Freedom is therefore 'uncreated'. On the other hand, Berdyaev says that 'the origin of man's freedom is in God, man's freedom being the same source as his life'. Indeed, man's freedom arises from Godmanhood, from his having been made in the image of God; it presupposes the possibility of his divinization, a possibility which he is free to accept or to reject (FS:131, 136). We will consider these ideas more fully in Section IV.

Berdyaev is aware that our freedom is in part the cause of human tragedy. Firstly, as Kierkegaard experienced, decision making can cause great anguish and dread; it is a burden which, as Dostoyevsky realised, that sometimes we would rather others carried for us. At the present moment, our advances in bio-technology increase our freedom but also cause us to face searching moral dilemmas. Secondly, we

can freely choose a path which leads to loosing our freedom, to addictions, to discord and hatred, the way of division in the spiritual world; we then become slaves of sin (FS:132). In this context, neither ascetic disciplining of the body, nor a hedonistic 'naturalistic glorification of the flesh' can give us freedom; it comes through a deep inwardness, in which 'no part of man's nature is external to him' (DR:149), and he knows himself as he is known. Finally, in our zeal to pass on to others the gospel of freedom, we may be tempted to try to force them to accept the truth. Both Christianity and Communism have done this, so destroying the truth which they contain (FS:132). Berdyaev rejected Communism, not because of its particular social system, but 'solely on account of freedom of the spirit' and because he believed 'in the freedom and ultimate independence of the human person vis-à-vis all social and particular orders' (DR:241).

In his passion for personal freedom, Berdyaev tends to underestimate the importance of social structures in forming the kind of stable cohesive society within which individuals are able to exercise choice. His model is always that of spiritual *sobornost*, in which we live freely together in sacrificial love, an ideal we have yet to realise. We can only be really free when we 'have entered upon another order of being which is spiritual in character' (FS:121).

Creativity

Another mark of our spiritual nature is our creativity. Real creativity is, in Berdyaev's thought, like God's creative act; it is the making of something new, which has not existed in the world before. Although God alone can create out of nothing, and our medium is the materials given by Him, there is an element in real creativity which has appeared, as it were, out of nothing (DM:162). So the sculptor's conception is occasioned but not determined by the marble, and the philosopher's creative thought includes an insight which goes beyond previous ideas. The great painter looks at the world in a new way, and the composer conceives sounds never before heard. This is a continuation of the creation of the world, a participation in the work of God, man answering God's call inviting man to bring into the world that which is new, and which could not exist without him. This is why creativity is different from procreation, which presupposes the handing on of matter and of information, in the form, say, of DNA, from the progenitor to the progeny; birth is always from something (op.cit.:84). It is not the same as evolution, for, despite the element of chance in the emerging differences between individuals, natural selection is determined by what already exists, and is a redistribution of force and energy, driven by necessity (op. cit. 162). In contrast, creativity always includes an element which cannot be explained as being caused by what has preceded it. .

Creativity presupposes three things. The first two belong to the world of the spirit; these are the undetermined creative act, possible because of our primary,

noetic uncreated freedom, and the God-given gifts and genius which we are employing. The third is this natural world, which is the field of man's creativity and which provides our basic materials. Further, there are two aspects to creativity. There is the Godward - the initial act of inspiration creating the really new, not determined by social or any other pressure. There is also the manward aspect, the communication of the inspiration to others. To do this, the artist or scientist must submit to social convention, to accepted literary or artistic norms or the language of science, even though to do so stretches the original intuition to the limits. Therefore there is inevitably a dilution of the original inspiration (op. cit.:64f).

Although creative work takes place in time, it 'is directed from eternity - eternal values, truth, beauty, righteousness, God and divine heights ...The creative act is an escape from the power of time and is an ascent to the divine' (op. cit.:74). It is in fact another aspect of Godmanhood, of the divine being revealed in the material through human action. (op. cit:84,163).

Creativity is to be found in philosophy, in science and technology, in the arts and in ethics; we will explore it further in the third section of this dissertation.

SPIRIT AND KNOWLEDGE.

Spirit then is shown most clearly through unique human persons, as they strive for meaning and fulfilment in the face of tragedy, and exercise their freedom and creativity. It can only be understood from the inside, from within experience. A philosophy of spirit therefore must be 'from the side of the ego, that is the man', rather than from the outside, from the material world (BE:5). Contrary to much of our modern thinking, it will therefore be subjective rather than objective. Here again, Berdyaev's philosophy can rightly be called 'existentialist', and we will now explore some aspects of this approach.

Object and Subject.

The relationship between object and subject was explored by another existential religious philosopher, Martin Buber (1878-1965), in his short but influential book *Ich und Du* (1923), translated into English as *I and Thou*. In his own book *Society and Solitude*, Berdyaev borrows Buber's language, and so it is with Buber that I begin this section.

Buber describes two types of relationship, which are represented by two primary words, *I-Thou* and *I-It*. The latter relationship is like the one which I have with my pen: the *I* is the detached observer or manipulator of the *It*, and the *It* remains external to the *I*. The *I-Thou* relationship is more like the one which I have with my wife; the *I* is

caught up in an encounter, a mutual indwelling, which changes both *I* and *Thou*. The relation to the *Thou* then is direct, intuitive; 'No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between *I* and *Thou*'. Knowledge of the *It* is indirect. *I-Thou* 'can only be spoken with the whole being', in mutual commitment; *I-It* can never be spoken with the whole being, but only with detachment. Another person is for me a *Thou*, but I can easily treat her impersonally, as an *it*. Similarly, an *I-It* relationship can develop some of the characteristics of an *I-Thou* relationship as I become existentially bound up with the object - say my favourite chair. God can only be encountered within an *I-Thou* relationship, never as an *It* (Buber 1937:1-12). In summary, in the *I-It* relationship, people and things are experienced as objects, in Kantian terms as 'means to an end'; in the *I-Thou* relationship, I do not experience the other as another, but rather I am aware of a mutually affirming relationship, which is at the same time a relationship with that other and a relationship with God, the 'eternal *Thou*' (CREP:105).

Buber goes on to say that primitive man is aware of the world in a series of *I-Thou* like relationships. For example, he is aware the light of the moon as it were streaming through him, a sensation which is immediate and dynamic, *I-Thou* -like in quality, rather than of the moon as a distinct object. I suppose that this is why the world for him is full of spirits and demons. Only later does he come to be aware of the moon itself, as an *It*, and of himself as being over-against it. Buber notes a similar progression in the awareness of a young baby, who is at first aware only of the immediate sensation of warmth or pain, and only gradually realises that his sensations have causes external to himself. (Buber 1937:18-31).

The term which Berdyaev uses for this process of separating the 'subject' from the 'object', is 'objectification'. He regards this as an essential step in humanity's growth in the understanding of the world. As I exteriorize the world, putting a gap between me and it, and identifying it as a series of objects, I begin to regard it rationally and unemotionally. Using my senses, aided if necessary by scientific instruments, I can observe, measure, pull to pieces, analyse, enumerate, experiment, change, utilise, and theorise. 'In the natural science, the activity of knowing is expressed in objectivization and in the subjection of knowledge to mathematics' (Lowrie 1965:28). This method has enabled man to take great strides forward in his understanding and control of the world, and, rightly used, can give great benefits to all the human race. So important is this method that 'objectivity' is now often assumed to be the quality we require in order to discern what is true, what is generally valid, what is real.

However, the act of objectification can be destructive when applied to human beings. In the world of politics and commerce, the process leads to the treating of the human being as a commodity, the use of the economic system and of industry for profit rather than for meeting human need, and of the political system for the benefit of a privileged group. This results in degradation, depersonalization, dehumanization, and all

kinds of social ills (Lowrie 1960:108). Indeed, so frightening are its consequences that in some of his writings Berdyaev seems to identify objectification with the Fall.

Objectification means 'the fallen state of the world, the world's fractionalisation and enslavement, in which existential subjects, personalities, are transformed into things, into objects' (Lowrie 1965:34).

Indeed, the objectivised world is opposed to the world of spirit. It is a world of cause and effect, of necessity, ruled by natural law, and not a world of freedom. The sense of the wholeness and unity of all things is lost as the world is studied in greater detail and in smaller fragments (Farmer 1932:68), at the same time as the real world of unique individual things and people is submerged in the over-arching conceptions of universal laws. Berdyaev accuses objectification of taking the phenomena, which as we have seen are the products of thought, of the subject, as the reality. Objectification 'produces signs of reality, not reality itself' (Lowrie 1965:35). Because spirit is 'the reality revealed in and through the existential subject', although objectification is a useful method in natural philosophy, it has no part in the philosophy of spirit (SR:9). Philosophy of spirit is not objective, but subjective, and this is the only way to real knowledge.

He finds support for this position in his reading of Kant. The object, the phenomena, is itself 'the offspring of the subject', the transcendental mind, spirit. Although the object has reality, we cannot know 'the thing in itself'. The only 'thing in itself' which the subject can know is himself; he is therefore the more real, the more objective. Berdyaev can argue then that objectivity lies in the subject, not the object, that 'the "objective" is precisely "subjective" whilst the "subjective" is "objective"'. For the subject is the creation of God while the object is the creation of the subject'. It is this insight, he claims, which makes existential philosophy possible (BE:9f,17).

At first sight, this seems to be a topsy-turvy view of the world, but it reminds us that the cold, detached, rational approach to the world, of which modern man is so proud, and upon which he places so much reliance, is not the only, or even the most useful, source of knowledge. However, surely Berdyaev goes too far beyond Kant, when he claims that

the struggle against the power of objectivization is the spiritual revolt of the noumena against the phenomena....the noumenon is spirit, personality, freedom; it is creative energy acting in this world (Lowrie 1965:35).

The noumena are not necessarily spiritual, nor can they revolt. Yet we do need to oppose those who regard objectification as the only way to truth; in that sense 'objectification' is a power to be fought against.

Knowledge.

This focus upon the subject is reinforced by Berdyaev's view that the

kind of knowledge for which the philosopher is looking is not 'facts' or information about objects, but of qualities such as meaning, purpose and value. These qualities exist not in the object, but within the subject, within the human being who alone recognises meaning, purpose and value. 'Beauty', as I understand Berdyaev, resides in the eye of the beholder, not in the rose.

Meaning is revealed to me only when I am in myself ...there can only be meaning in that which is in me and with me, i.e. in the spiritual world.....to objectify is to destroy meaning; in order to understand meaning , one must enter into it, and this communion is not objectification.

Therefore in the spiritual sciences 'objectification invariably means the end of true knowledge' (DM:10&14). As Khomyakov had realised, there is no object we can identify as 'knowledge'. Knowledge resides within the knower, within the subject, not in the book. Even in the case of rational knowledge, *I-it* knowledge, the intellect itself is 'inseparable from the existence of the whole man, from the choice of his will and from his emotional experience' (BE:51). I study astronomy because I am emotionally moved by the sight of the stars, and I therefore choose to find out more, and use my will to make myself keep at it when the going becomes tough. In fact man apprehends emotionally to a greater extent than intellectually (op. cit.:37; SS:15).

One source of knowledge, the validity of which was denied by Kant, is intuition, Khomyakov's 'faith'. May I add briefly to what I have already written about this. Carl Jung (1875-1961) maintained that the mind has at least four functions:- thinking, feeling, sensing and intuiting. This last is knowledge beyond the senses, a sixth sense which many people, not least those in the caring professions, have developed to a high degree (Harrison 1993:16ff). This source of knowledge, Berdyaev suggests, is present in the most rational of speculation, for example 'in the inspiration of Descartes, Spinoza and Hegel' (SS:15). It is through intuition that I can apprehend the reality of the noumena, that I learn to understand and empathise with other people, and that I come to know God and to recognise Truth. For God cannot be known as an external object; we cannot know facts about Him, but only know Him Himself within the *I-Thou* relationship (DM:17).

Philosophical knowledge then is subjective, in that it resides within the person, but not within an isolated individual. Rather, a person knows as part of the community, and knowledge is a form of communication and intercourse among human beings. Its apprehension therefore depends, not just on the scope of individual minds, but also upon their spiritual state, upon the degree of communion and community between them. Knowledge is an expression of *sobornost*; truth emerges from and is perceived within the community. (BE:39)

Existence itself cannot be the object of knowledge, for knowledge takes place within being. 'I know reality in and through myself, as man. Only an existent can

know existence' (DM:16). Because knowledge is an event within existence, within being, its emergence changes being, adds to it and illumines it. Knowledge is itself part of life, and reflects upon it. Even the critique of knowledge, the reflection of reason upon itself, is not the abstract thing that it claims to be, but a living experience (op. cit.:4).

Berdyaev expresses his understanding of knowledge like this:-

There is a knowledge independent of the conceptual apprehension of objects on the premise of universal principle, a knowledge penetrating existence and concrete actuality, a knowledge which is at once a participation in being, and an illumination of life. And this is the only way of apprehending spirit, the ever-concrete spirit' (SR:11).

He regards objectification itself as a stage to be passed through on the way to 'supraconsciousness', when apprehension becomes intuitive union and co-operation with the rest of reality (BE:61).

Truth.

We have all experienced those times when, whether slowly or in an instant, as we often put it, 'the penny drops' and we come to 'see the truth'. Berdyaev differentiates between Truth and truth (BE:44). 'There is truth in the sense of the knowledge of reality, and there is truth (Truth) which is reality itself' and which is its meaning, its supreme quality and value, its logos (op. cit.:42). We can know truth objectively, we experience Truth subjectively and intuitively. The little and partial truths reflect light from the whole major Truth, like rays from the sun, and are only apprehensible because in the mind of the one who knows them there is something which corresponds to Truth, otherwise the human mind would be overwhelmed by the multiplicity of the world (BE:44;TR:27).

There are no 'objective' criteria by which we can judge Truth, no external authority or tradition by which it can be validated, no fixed and abiding standard by which it can be assessed. All criteria only have authority in so far as we believe in them, and so are themselves subjective. Indeed, they are part of the objective world, and are themselves less than Truth (TR:39). Truth is not validated by its usefulness and serviceability, as in pragmatism; it may in fact destroy the present order and demand martyrdom (BE:46). Neither is Truth necessarily that which is accepted by the majority, as in a democracy (TR:40); it may only be recognised by one person, the prophet who stands alone, and is rejected by the rest of mankind because it is too uncomfortable. Never-the-less, Truth is given for the sake of everyone, but, whilst it is not just for an elite, it must not be allowed to sink to the lowest common denominator. Further, it is communal, as others recognise the Truth in the prophet's message, and it is revealed when people are living together in brotherhood, when there is free fulness of life for the different personalities - when there is *sobornost*. (op. cit.:25). In short, Truth is self

authenticating within the human spirit, although there is always risk in its acceptance because we can never be sure that we are perceiving it rightly (op. cit.:40). All I can honestly say is 'this is the Truth as I see it'.

Although we recognise it when we see it, Truth is not revealed ready made, but we must work at it; it is 'a conquest which is won by creative act ...a creative discovery ... it is a transfiguration of given reality' - it changes the world as it has been until now (TR:23). There are therefore degrees of awareness and of the apprehension of Truth, scientific, philosophical, religious, and mystical gnosis, and it is revealed gradually as the spiritual, cultural and intellectual conditions make its reception possible (ibid.).

As our earlier discussion has shown, Truth is not objective, but neither is it subjective; even though it is recognised by the person, it does not reside in her. It is beyond these categories; in Berdyaev's phrase it is 'the other side of the antithesis between the subjective and the objective' (op. cit.:40). Truth is Divine, it is the divine light. 'Truth is God and God is Truth ... it is Spirit and it is God'. But, as we have seen, it is at the same time man's discovery; therefore it belongs to Godmanhood (op. cit:27f).

Revelation.

Revelation as a major source of spiritual knowledge. The word has a number of different shades of meaning.

Firstly, it emphasises God's initiative. 'If there is a God, He must reveal himself, and provide some means by which men may know about Him'. Revelation is 'God going out to man' (TR:46).

Secondly, the word indicates the manner of receiving this knowledge. 'Revelation takes place in the spirit, for it is a true integration of the spiritual in the world of nature and in our natural life'. It occurs within the depths of the subject (FS:89f). Revelation is 'spirit to spirit', it is an interior process (SR:53f). 'Revelation is the fact of the Spirit in me, in the subject; it is spiritual experience, spiritual life' (DH:14). So although the voice of God was heard echoing from Sinai when God spoke to Moses, this was in fact a 'projection and objectification' of what actually happened in his innermost depths (FS:91). Similarly, Paul's encounter with Christ on the Damascus road was a spiritual experience 'it was inwardly that he encountered Christ' (TR:47).

Further, revelation is divine-human; because 'Christianity is the religion of Godmanhood...it presupposes the activity not only of God, but of man as well' (DH:21). Revelation brings about a change in consciousness through the actions of both divine grace and of human freedom, for, unlike the material world, which dominates our consciousness and leaves us with no choice, revelation depends upon our freewill for its acceptance (FS:98,103). As the purpose of revelation is to make people free, it cannot be revealed in an unwilling medium; I must voluntarily address the divine and spiritual world, and make a sacrifice of reason to attain the higher reason (FS:106f). Therefore, if

the life of Christ is to be revelation to me, the events in the Gospels must become events of my spiritual experience; I must enter into them and re-live them, so that they belong to the spiritual pathway which I tread. There is no passive revelation - its reception requires an act of will (TR:49).

Finally, the word 'revelation' also signifies the content of the message; God has revealed Himself in the lives of the great men and women of faith, and through the history of His people. This experience is then reflected upon, the truth recognised and articulated, and passed down the generations. Even though the word was not yet in fashion, Berdyaev was well aware of the hermeneutical problems which we encounter when we come to interpret that revelation in another age, and encourages us to use our intellects to disentangle its core from the culture and mind set of the people to whom it was given. We are to humanise the revelation, eliminating from the message all that is less than human, such as teaching about God's vindictiveness or the idea of hell. God is truly human - it is man who is inhuman. Yet God as Truth rises above everything human and the limitations of this world (TR:49,51f).

Because revelation is the showing forth of Truth, however partially, there is again no external authority which can validate its message, neither Bible, nor hierarchy nor tradition. Just as Kant used reason to pass judgement on reason, so revelation must pass judgement on revelation. Tradition, which passes on to us the creative thought and experience of the past, shows us that revelation has always been subject to the judgement of reason and conscience, enlightened by revelation from within, that is by God's continued illumination of individuals and of the community of faith (TR:7).

Although religion is expressed through social institutions, and is therefore externalised and objectified, it can become the voice and incarnation of God, 'a primary manifestation independent of the social and objective world' (SS:123). Further, revelation is not limited to Christianity, but comes to us through other faiths also. 'Where the divine is manifested, there is revelation'. As Christianity is the universal revelation, it is bound to be prefigured in other faiths (FS:88).

Revelation is not yet complete; it develops, but does not evolve. As we have already noticed, evolution in Berdyaev's mind is determined, part of the world of necessity, whereas revelation is always the light breaking in from another world.

Christian truth is revealed in a dynamic and creative process in the world, which is still unfinished, nor can it be finished until the end of time'. It is yet to be revealed in all its fullness, as our consciousness is enlarged, and 'an illumination more radiant in character' shines forth 'from the spiritual world (TR:54; FS:113,116).

Mysticism

I have already noted the importance of mysticism within the Orthodox

tradition. It plays a major role in Berdyaev's thought and experience, and, I suggest, may have shaped his understanding of subjective character of knowledge, of our interior recognition of Truth, and of revelation as happening in the depths of our being. 'Truth is known through mysticism'. Spiritual truths 'can only be expressed in the language of spiritual experience.....an inner revelation of mysticism'(FS:23f). 'Only facts of mysticism within Christianity are absolute, and our thought about them is always relative' (op.cit:65). I want add three points to what I have already written about it.

The word 'mysticism' is linked with the New Testament use of *μυστηριον*, meaning a secret, the secret of God's love revealed for us in Christ (Wakefield 1983:272).

God is Mystery, a Mystery towards which man transcends and with which he enters into communion ... Contacts with God and communion with Him are possible' (SF:83).

For Berdyaev then, mysticism arises out of the mystery of the inexhaustible and the ineffable, of the divine, and of 'the possibility of vital contact with this mystery and of a life in it and with it'. Man is attracted by this mystery, and union with it is possible because there is already 'an inner kinship between the human spirit and the divine, between creation and creator'. For him, the mystical experience is primary; mysticism is the soil on which religion flourishes, and without which it withers and decays (FS:239ff). Indeed, as we have seen, the Orthodox view is that we discern the truth of dogma, of the Christian mysteries, by sharing in the experience of them through the continuing revelation of the Holy Spirit rather than by intellectual discernment.

Secondly, mysticism is a natural human ability, 'life at its deepest' (FS:250), open to us all, which we need to cultivate through an asceticism of prayer and devotion, leading towards contemplation and culminating in the experience of union with the Divine. Evelyn Underhill defined it as 'the art of union with Reality' (1914:2). There are however those in whom this capacity is particularly developed, and who are especially gifted in this direction, whom we call 'mystics'. These individuals reach much further than the general mass; 'the faculty of a intuitive contemplation constitutes a new organ non-existent in the average consciousness' (FS101). Before the days of Christianity, there have been men and women 'of great wisdom who have received the light.... Mystics, the significance of whom is universal, have always existed' (TR:145). Such people give us real insights into Truth. Berdyaev was particularly influenced by mystics such as Plotinus, the Jewish Kabbalah, and Eckhardt. The supreme example for him of this type of mystic was the Lutheran shoemaker from Göltz, Jacob Boehme.

Finally, the mystical way is not to be identified with introspection. As the asceticism moves inwards, deep into ourselves, we find that we are also moving out of ourselves. 'All mysticism teaches that the depths of man are more than human, that in them there lurks a mysterious contact with God and with the world'. So penetration into

ourselves is also a penetration into the innermost recesses of the spiritual world, where there is

no separation between things.....(where) nothing is external to me, everything is in me and with me ... I only acquire being, reality, and personality when everything about me has ceased to be external, strange, impenetrable, or lifeless, and when the kingdom of love is realized (FS:167).

This sense of the unity of all creation and of oneness with it is not uncommon. This contact with 'divine actuality' is not 'subjective romanticism', but a sober acquaintance with realities (Lowrie 1965:174f). Mysticism has about it a noetic quality, knowledge of 'depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect' (James 1960:367). Berdyaev calls this 'gnostic mysticism', in which is revealed 'a spiritual knowledge, the attainment of God's mysteries, outside the established distinction between the metaphysical and theology'; indeed, theology finds it very difficult to cope with the mystic's expression of these mysteries because he must use a different, paradoxical language. Nevertheless, he gives important insights into reality, of which both theology and philosophy must take account (Lowrie 1965:174f).

THE LANGUAGE OF SPIRIT.

What kind of language can we use when we speak about eternal, ever-present and free spirit in this world of time, space and necessity? Before we can answer that question, we must consider another:- what is the relationship between the natural and the spiritual worlds?

Spirit and matter.

At first sight, Berdyaev says, the spiritual and the material worlds are utterly unlike one another. Exteriorly they appear not to meet or have any interaction, and there is between them no visible cause and effect. We may look for a sign, but no sign can be given to this, or any generation. However at a deeper level, 'spirit absorbs the world into itself and reveals it in a new light' (FS:9).

A key word in Berdyaev's thought is 'cosmos', used in the original sense of the ordered unity of all domains of existence from matter to mind to God. 'The whole cosmos, the whole of creation, is included in Spirit and it is only within Spirit that there is any cosmos', as there are in the natural and phenomenal world processes which disintegrate it (TR:145).

The cosmos is a unity, and the spiritual man is not separated from the life of the material universe. The natural man regards the material world as external and experiences it from the outside; the spiritual man encounters the cosmos from the

inside, in the beauty of its inner life. So it is that to have a deep love of nature in all its forms 'is to have already experienced the spirit' and to have gone beyond the apparent disunity and the external character of nature. 'Spirit in the religious sense is notthe turning of one's back upon the world and its suffering' ; rather it transforms and enlightens it.

In our attitude towards animals and plants and minerals, fields, forest, seas and mountains, we can break through to what lies behind this realm of bondage and necessity, of strife and hostility. We can enter into communion with cosmic beauty and the spirit of community (TR:147-149).

Here, Berdyaev is not writing as a Romantic, who used nature as the 'embodiment of freedom, truth, creative power and infinity' in their reaction against the determination and 'tyrannical norms and laws' of industrialized civilization. Indeed, for him nature is itself the sphere of 'determinism, legalism and finality' (SR:68). Rather, he is speaking of nature as 'preconscious, existential', rather than as 'post-conscious and objective' (SR:196), as experienced intuitively and mystically. He is speaking from within the Orthodox tradition, which, as we have already noted, regards the material world as sacramental, a manifestation of spirit.

In his Godmanhood, man himself is 'microcosmos', a unity of the material and the spiritual. The human spiritual life itself is manifested, not in abstract elements of the soul life, but in a concrete spiritual culture within the world of matter, time and space.

The materials of a philosophy of a spiritual life are contributed by the spiritual life of humanity itself as it has developed in history: it is always with life as concrete that religion, mysticism, philosophy, science, morality and artistic endeavour are concerned (op.cit.:19).

Following Orthodox teaching (Alfeyev 2002:63), Berdyaev does not usually identify soul and spirit, as we tend to do in the West. For him, soul belongs to nature, being purely psychological, whereas spirit comes from the depths, from within, absorbing and illuminating body, motives and soul (FS:8,14,326).

Another key word Berdyaev's thought is 'symbol'. There are, he says, two parts to a symbol - it is both the sign and the reality which it signifies. It therefore assumes the existence of two worlds, and is a bridge that links them. The physical world is a symbol of the spiritual. This does not mean that the outward form of the world is devoid of reality; it is not a subjective illusion, but it is an incarnation of spiritual realities. These are a liberating and uniting influences, the discernment of which rests upon spiritual experience. As the natural sciences realise, the natural, empirical world has no significance in itself but is a meaningless closed system; it is only as a symbol of the spiritual world that it has a purpose. Even the life of man himself has no meaning, unless

we regard him as a symbol, made in the image of the Divine Being. He finds his own significance and connectedness when he becomes aware of the spiritual world (FS:52f).

It follows in Berdyaev's mind that events in the spiritual life can be reflected in the world of time and space and matter, which then becomes a symbol of them. In particular, the birth, life, death and the resurrection of Christ are authentic facts of the natural world, but can also be regarded as objectified and exteriorized symbols of spiritual realities. Berdyaev is in no doubt that Christ really appeared in history, but considers that, as the various attempts have shown, a Life of Christ as historical event is almost impossible to write; only a spiritual life can be written (op. cit.:47). As the Introduction to St John's Gospel in *The Jerusalem Bible* expresses it, these historical events 'were at the same time both divine and human,....., events which flowed in time but were rooted in eternity' (Jones 1966:143). 'Flashes of metahistory shine through'. The Messiahship of Christ is an invisible fact - historically the Son of God made his appearance *incognito*, in the form of a servant (ibid). The mystery of redemption and of Calvary is an interior moment of life and spiritual development, 'the submission of all life to crucifixion and sacrifice', truths which remain incomprehensible unless there is an inward and spiritual acceptance of Christ. Christian worship, not least its sacraments, with its external, 'carnal' character, is a real and essential symbol of the spiritual, and the great mystics have remained rooted in the symbolism and 'incarnationalism' of the Christian life (FS:34,36). However, symbolisation is not the same as realisation; it points us towards the spiritual realities, and can become the way to our experiencing them; the danger is that we take the symbols as the reality, and so objectify them; we will return to this later.

Berdyaev is a dualist, but rejects the kind of dualism which sees God as over and against the world, in which the world is non-divine, and there is no mysterious relationship between the divine and the natural. However he also rejects a rationalist view, which fails to recognise the difference between the material and the spiritual, and assumes that the mystery of the Divine is accessible to reason; this, he says leads to Deism and the negation of religion. Rather, he accepts this way of symbolism, in which the mystery is accessible through the material, as through a mirror darkly. His views are close to those of Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), who in his book *The Idea of the Holy* (1923) stressed the importance of the irrational, numinous, or, as Berdyaev would prefer to call them, the 'supra-rational', aspects of religion. The dualism which is present in Berdyaev's philosophy is not between spirit and matter, but between modes of existence, between life and thing, liberty and necessity, and between creative movement and passive submission to external impulses (FS:7).

Myth and Dogma.

The language in which mystical and spiritual knowledge is expressed is

myth. 'Myth is a reality immeasurably greater than concept', and is

the concrete recital of events and original phenomena of the spiritual life symbolised in the natural world, which has expressed itself in the language, memory and creative energy of the people ... Myth always represents reality, but its reality is symbolic.

So the myth of Adam and Eve conveys the great reality of the separation of man and of the world from God; this is one of the original phenomena of the spiritual life and 'belongs to the deep things of the spirit which are before creation'. The making of myth goes back to the dawn of human consciousness, when 'the spirit was enveloped in nature'. Even now, the core of man's being is still unconscious, and it is within this level that myths are created and speak. A philosophy which eliminates myths cannot know God, because 'relations between Creator and creation are paradoxical so far as reason is concerned', and can only be expressed in myth (FS:69-72).

Spiritual realities are also articulated within faith communities in the form of dogma. Dogmas 'possess absolute and indefectible truth', marking out the way of the spirit which is truth and life, by expressing spiritual events upon which our lives and fate depend. For example, it is 'not a matter of indifference' whether or not God exists, whether Christ our saviour is, or is not, risen from the dead.

Without defining, Berdyaev differentiates between dogma and doctrine. Dogmas are more fundamental than doctrines; salvation and life do not depend upon the (intellectual) acceptance of doctrine, but upon the acceptance of the dogmas which make salvation possible. So the dogma of the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son is not a doctrine, but the expression of a mystical fact indispensable to human life, because it makes possible a relationship with the Divine. For example, Arianism, with its denial of Christ as God-Man, does not permit the perfect union between man and God. 'Dogmatic formulae anathematize not erroneous doctrines, but a false orientation of spiritual experience, a deviation from the spiritual path'. They point to things which take place in the spiritual world which bring men into the Kingdom of God, making possible the transfiguration and deification of the world. They do not however give final knowledge of God himself. All of this is well in accordance with Orthodox teaching, as shown by this quotation from Vladimir Lossky,

we must live the dogma expressing a revealed truth, in such a fashion that instead of assimilating the mystery to our mode of understanding, we should, on the contrary, look for a profound change, an inner transformation of spirit, enabling us to experience it mystically (1957:8).

However, he goes beyond what is generally accepted in Orthodoxy when he contemplates the possibility of development in the Church's dogmas. These happen, he says, when 'in the inner depth a new form of religious experience has come to light,...the

fire of the spirit seeks new forms of expression in the external world.....for when a creative movement of the spirit takes place in a vertical direction, that is from the inner depths, development horizontally is inevitable and cannot be stopped' (op. cit.:75-78,317). Views like this led some Orthodox who regard the development of dogma to have been completed in the early centuries, to view him with suspicion, but fit in with those of us who regard revelation as still incomplete.

The material world is then the sphere within which spirit is manifested, and as such is to be respected and valued.

SPIRIT, GOD, HOLY SPIRIT AND THE AGE OF SPIRIT.

What is the relationship between spirit, God, and Holy Spirit?

'God is spirit'. But is spirit just another name for God? My reading of Berdyaev is that for him God exists *within* the spiritual world. If God emerged from the primeval *ungrund*, as Berdyaev at times appears to teach, then God is part of the spiritual world, rather than the *grund* of it; this would be an unorthodox view. Berdyaev however does not state this clearly, and uses the same language of God as he does of spirit, apparently identifying the two. So he writes of God as he would of spirit 'God is Mystery, God is the Truth of the world, and the Freedom of the world...God is Love and Freedom' (TR:112). Like spirit, God can never be an object, nor is he subject. Yet, and here is language which Berdyaev could not use of spirit, 'God is He in whom man can have absolute faith, He of Whom man is an inalienable part, He to Whom man can surrender himself entirely' (SS:97). God is a mystery, to whom no relationships derived from the human world are applicable; 'only that which is derived from the depths of spiritual experience, the experience of transcendental man, is applicable to God' (TR:111). N. O. Lossky summarises his teaching as follows:-

God is spirit, really present in the life of the saints, in the mystics and in creative activity. There is no need for rational proofs of God if we have experienced spirit (1952:234).

Spirit is not absolutely identical with the Holy Spirit. 'There is a difference between Spirit and the Holy Spirit, but they are one and the same reality in different degrees' (TR:143). Again, 'the distinction between the Holy Spirit and spirit is purely doctrinal' (SR:183). Rather, 'the grace of the Holy Spirit is a particular quality of the spiritual life and constitutes its highest aspiration'. (TR:141). The charisms of the Holy Spirit are all shown in spirit as prophet, apostle, poet, philosopher, inventor or reformer.

Further, the religion of spirit speaks not only of salvation and justification, but of the illumination of human nature, as a victory over human slavery and abasement, and as a surge of vital forces and ecstasy (SR:183). So in practice, it seems that we cannot distinguish between spirit and Holy Spirit. To Berdyaev, the Holy Spirit is closer to man than God the Father, or even God the Son, for, in the Holy Spirit, God becomes immanent in the world and in man. The profoundest element in the spiritual life is the revelation of the Holy Spirit and of the hope of a future spiritual life which will transfigure the present natural world (FS:47f).

The 'transfiguration of the present natural world' is part of the Orthodox eschatological beliefs, and lead us to a final element in Berdyaev's philosophy of spirit. He looked forward to a new outpouring of the (Holy) Spirit, of a new age of the Spirit, when the true spiritual nature of all things would be fully revealed. 'The era of the Spirit can be nothing but a revelation of a sense of community which is not merely social but cosmic, not only a brotherhood of man, but a brotherhood of men with all cosmic life, with the whole of creation' (TR:149). There will be no sovereignty of God, or monarch, or of the people, or of the Church. It is not a utopia to be realized here on earth as it is at the moment, but 'a new aeon, a new revelation within it', a world transformed. This presupposes a change in the human mind and its liberation from the power of "objectification" (op. cit.:150f). Berdyaev longs to see a new spirituality, which would look forward to the coming of Christ and of the Kingdom of God (SR:197)

The preparation for this new aeon is man's responsibility as well as God's (ibid). Its coming requires human effort, because it is the revelation of the link between the human and the divine, of Godmanhood. It is not the disappearance of man into God, as in pantheism, but the appearance of new man, 'of transcendental man, the eternal man, the concretely integral, the freely creative man, who actively takes his part in the creation of the world and of himself'. (TR:151).

In this new age, violence will disappear. However, this has a downside because there will be then no more need for acts of sacrifice and heroism, no uplifting impulse, none of the enthusiasm which belongs to the struggle against evil. There is even the danger of becoming bourgeois - for Berdyaev an almost unspeakable horror! (op. cit.:151f). The present distinctions between good and evil will no longer apply.

This era of the Spirit, or the third revelation, must not be taken in an entirely chronological sense. It is not beyond the grave, but rather it is 'our present world enlightened and transfigured, and which has become creatively free'. We must break free now from the frozen torpor of dogma and rigidity of thought and enter into the ideal relationship between human and divine which is shown in Jesus Christ, not dogmatically but existentially. Here and now, we can receive this in Spirit and in Truth. (op. cit:153).

THE ESSENCE OF BERDYAEV'S PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRIT.

I will now draw together the various threads in Berdyaev's philosophy, and so weave a picture of what the word 'spirit' meant to him.

The key to Berdyaev's understanding of spirit is his realisation that man is the supreme manifestation of spirit. Spirit is revealed in Godmanhood, within personal existence, through each personality who is unique, separate and distinct, and yet it is 'possessed of a universal content, capable of embracing the world with its love and understanding', as part of *sobornost*, the fellowship of the spirit. The spiritual world is 'the image of a concrete inner humanity, of an experience of human destiny, of human love and death, of human tragedy'. 'Spirit is primarily existential' (SR:12ff), to be discovered in the depth of our being. Of all realities therefore, spirit is the most real, the most immediate, because what we experience within ourselves is 'more real than the objective'.

Spirit therefore is experienced as freedom, creativity and meaning. Spirit is life - authentic life (FS:8). This is not life in the biological sense, which Berdyaev calls 'passive life' or mere existence, but active life - energy, dynamism, creativeness and transcendence. It is only as spirit drives man on to rise to that which is higher than himself that he realises himself (SR:32; DH:113). Spirit then pushes us on to go beyond our limitations and our immanent experience, and so is revolutionary, and the source of our free yearning for the Divine (op.cit.:48). It is in this sense that Christ said 'I have come that they may have life, and may have it in all its fullness' (John 10.10).

There are therefore a number of common approaches to the idea of 'spirit' which are ruled out. Firstly, we must avoid speaking of spirit as an object, as a substance, as an objective reality of a peculiar kind or of a higher order than matter. For example, as the organisation of the material world increases in complexity from particle to atom to molecule, from inanimate to living matter, from bacteria to man, new properties emerge. For some thinkers, the mind is a property which emerges as we reach the level of the most complex structure known to mankind - the human brain (Clayton 1997:242ff). So perhaps spirit is also a property of the natural world which begins to emerge when evolution reaches the human level. This for Berdyaev cannot be so; spirit is not the highest stage in the hierarchy of the objective world, it is not an epiphenomenon of matter (BE:7), for, as we have seen, freedom, creativity and the yearning for meaning cannot arise from within the determinism of the natural order.

One must not place the reality of the Spirit side by side with the realities of the "objective" world of nature and history as though they were

comparable ... the distinction between spirit and nature is something deeper, and thus realities of an entirely different order are established, not various degrees of the one and the same reality' (TR:140).

Indeed, the inconsistencies which arise when we speak of spirit in objective terms, thinking of it as a static system, leads to the separation of God, the world and the human soul, and often causes others to deny the reality of the spiritual world, (SR:5; FS:9,15).

Neither is spirit just an abstract idea, 'the ideal, universal premise of the world' (SR:12). It is not the sum total of those human qualities, moral, and aesthetic, which many in the secular world are happy to call 'spiritual values', without acknowledging the reality of spirit as such. For example, Don Cupitt has defined God as 'the sum of our values, representing to us their ideal unity, their claim upon us and their creative power' (1984:269). At times Berdyaev uses similar language; 'spirituality is the highest quality, a value, man's highest achievement'. But he goes on,

Spirit is, as it were, a divine breath, penetrating human existence and endowing it with the highest dignity, with the highest quality of existence, with an inner independence and unity (SR:6).

Spirit is not the collective name for these values, but is their source.

Spiritual realities are revealed in the spiritual life, through spiritual experience, which is not the experience of any other reality, but of reality itself. In the end we cannot explain spiritual experience as an illusion or as auto suggestion, as some would want to do. 'Spirit' is not another name for the emotional life of the soul, merely the expression of our feelings and desires (SR:5). Neither is spiritual experience determined by time or space, for it has no cause in either the physical or the psychical worlds. Only spiritual experience itself can prove its authenticity - like Truth, we know it deep down in ourselves when we meet it. This may be no help to a person who has not yet experienced the reality of spirit, but 'absolute, genuine, rational empiricism must always be open to experiences which the person has not yet experienced for themselves'. The fact that I have not experienced is not proof that no one has had such an experience (FS:10-14).

We cannot define spirit in terms of other objects; 'God and the spiritual world exist, not in relationship of comparison with other things, but rather in their own right' (FS:9). 'Spiritual reality has another genesis - a non-objective reality imparted by God' (SR:6). But neither is spirit subject, even though it is revealed in the subject, and 'inheres only in the subject, who alone is existential ... divinely created and ... therefore endowed with primary existence' (op. cit.:5). Spirit is beyond subject. In fact, we cannot comprehend spirit as either object or subject. 'In its original primordial nature the life of the Spirit is outside the sphere of objectification, outside the antithesis of subject and object, it is in the dimension of depth' (SR:32).

In short, spirit is freedom, meaning, creativity, integrity, love, value, and 'an orientation towards the highest Divine world and union with it' (SR:32). It is life 'in God, in truth, goodness and beauty, and not in the natural isolation of soul and body'. It is revealed gradually by degrees and in a diversity of qualities, and all of humanity's intellectual and artistic life, and all fellowship in love, are parts of it (FS:47). We speak about it in symbols, myths and dogma, and the physical world is itself a symbol of spirit's reality.

'Spirit actually is the Truth in man. It is Meaning and Light' (TR:145). 'Spirit is the Divine element in man, the spiritual element inherent in him' (SR:198). Spirit is a primary reality 'at a level which is deeper than, and transcends, the sphere of discursive reasoning' (DR:79). 'The real depths of spirit are apprehensible only existentially in the personal experience of destiny, in its suffering, nostalgia, love, creation, freedom and death' (SR:53). Spirit is prior to all else, other than God.

Let me give an illustration. I can observe my body and its reactions; I can observe my feelings, and can watch them change almost from moment to moment. I can observe my thinking, and observe my act of observing. However, I cannot observe myself as the observer, but can only look out from within myself. In the same way 'my inner spiritual reality is not an object - I cannot be an object in relation to myself' (SR:6). I cannot look at spirit objectively from the outside; rather, I look out from within it. Spirit is fundamental, foundational, *a priori*. I do not understand it in terms of other things, but can only truly comprehend things from within spirit. Further than this we cannot go, nor do we need to go. Both spirit's elusiveness and the overwhelming reality remain.

III. HOW CAN WE GROW IN AWARENESS OF SPIRIT?

'The spiritual life is not limited to the interior life of each individual, but also includes the relationship between men and societies. Spiritual life includes not only the "I" but also the "we" '(TNE:52). So I now consider the expression of spirit in both church and secular society. Further, if we are to be sensitive to spirit's reality, we need to develop our inner life through a spiritual discipline, and so we will also briefly review Berdyaev's ideas about this.

OBJECTIFICATION OF SPIRIT.

Because spirit is expressed in concrete ways, through history, civilization, human communities, through symbols and the church itself, because therefore we have to exteriorise what is inwards, there is a danger that we regard these tangible institutions, words and rituals, which are meant to convey the reality of spirit, as the reality itself. Berdyaev sees this 'objectification of spirit' occurring in many fields, not least within the church itself.

Objectification and the Church.

I suspect that one of the reasons why people reject the life of the church today is not because she is out of date, but that they do not experience within her life any sense of spiritual reality. Berdyaev would say that this is because the church has objectified spirit. For instance, the temptation in the Orthodox church is to focus unduly upon its rich ritual and ceremonial, treating these as having intrinsic value, rather than as being ways through to reality (SR:64). I would suggest that at the moment, the danger for the Church of England is of objectifying not the ritual but the words. We have rightly put much effort into their revision over the past thirty years or more, but in doing so risk forgetting their purpose. A sensitively conducted 1662 service can still be a living experience of spirit, whereas as badly led *Common Worship* can be spiritually empty.

Again, the church, says Berdyaev, objectifies by making religion into a following of the letter of the law, the keeping of commandments, rather than a free obedience to God himself, and the making of our own responsible moral decisions. Further, relationship between the hierarchy and lay people can become distant and authoritarian, instead of both sharing in the discernment of truth. Finally, the ecclesiastical parish ceases to be a Christian community, and becomes merely a geographical area or a unit of organisation (ibid).

In particular, he accuses the church of objectifying dogma (ibid), an accusation made also by Don Cupitt. In the early church, Cupitt says (1984:258),

theology signified not so much a body of teachings (dogmata) as an active striving after wisdom which required a wholehearted commitment to a pure and ascetical way of life. In time, theology became an objectified body of dogmas for which the status of a science was claimed. So dogmatic theology, instead of remaining simply a representation of the primal experiences from which authentic faith has always begun, become 'a highly coloured screen' which people use to shield themselves from the truth. Modern doubters are iconoclasts demolishing this screen, so that we can enter into the truths afresh (op. cit.:244).

Berdyaev counters the objectification of spirit in the church in two ways. The first is by the recognition of the true nature of the church, as being not just an institution, but as having 'existential significance' (SR:55). Whilst acknowledging that Berdyaev does not often write about ecclesiology, Aidan Nichols finds four main strands in his thought. Firstly, the church is both communion, which is spiritual, and a society, belonging to the natural world. These two aspects tend to be in tension, but through the Holy Spirit and sensitive leadership, its necessary structures can be expressions of community, and therefore of spirit. Again, the church is *sobornost*, and that mystical fellowship can be deepened as we mutually commit ourselves to one another and to God, and are affirmed in being freely ourselves. Further, the church is *vseedinstvo*, 'all-unity', 'in which all that is true and valuable to the cosmos subsists'. The Church exists so that through it a divinizing process can take place, the 'christification' of the whole world. However, as this will not be fully achieved until the coming of the Kingdom of God, the church must not absolutise the historical visible structures, but be aware of their interim character. Finally, the Church is to be understood in terms of Godmanhood; in her both divine grace and human freedom are to be expressed (Nichols 1989:136-141). Because of all of this, I suggest we theologise and teach less about the church's visible structures and ministry, whether ordained or lay, and more about her essential nature, her hiddenness. Further, her leaders are called to make the spirit real to others through the manner in which they conduct worship, the vision which guides their administration, and the love shared with their fellow believers.

The second way in which Berdyaev counters the objectification of spirit in the church is by emphasising once again the importance of the mystical element of the Christian life, which is 'the source and the root of all religious consciousness'. There is 'a need for a mystical revival and for a re-spiritualizing of religion' (MCA:297). He contrasts two images of the church. There is the Church of the Apostle Peter, to whom was given the care of the 'little ones', the church which is adapted to the average level of man, and which is intellectual and hierarchical. This must give way to the Church of the Apostle John, which is mystical, creative, the church of love, 'bearing within itself the fullness of truth about Christ and about man' (op. cit.: 299, 335). This mystical church has a deepening existential awareness of the spiritual realities, an awareness which is

cultivated in a disciplined Christian life.

Society, science, technics and economics.

In becoming aware of the reality of spirit, we need to look beyond its purely religious manifestation, to its expression in all aspects of human life. To do this will give a more balanced picture of Berdyaev's philosophy of spirit, because much of his writing was about the Christian response to the cultural and political issues of his day.

We are accustomed to regarding the arts as belonging to the 'spiritual' part of life. 'It is even an accepted expression to call the creative element in all spheres of spiritual activity "artistic" ' (MCA:225). Indeed, the meaning of the creative act is best revealed in artistic creativeness.

In the creative-artistic attitude to the world we glimpse another world ... In every artistic activity a new world is created, the cosmos, a world realised and free' (ibid).

In our own day, it has become a commonplace to speak of art galleries as the cathedrals of our modern age; it perhaps symbolic that St Paul's and Tate Modern face each other at either end of the Millennium Bridge.

We do not so easily recognise spirit in other areas. The problem is once again that of objectivisation. Berdyaev warns us that there is fettering of the spirit in everyday society, in state, academies, classes and families. We reduce what could be communities of the spirit into conventions, customs, laws and norms, but spirit 'like a flame, like freedom, like creativeness, is opposed to any social stagnation or any lifeless tradition' (SR:49-52). In the state, the symbols and signs which both express and help to create community life have become the prerogative of authority, and ceremonies degenerate into being mere formalities. We use titles such as 'Tsar, Pope, Metropolitan, and bishop', whereas the spiritual realities are 'saint', 'prophet', 'creative genius' and 'social reformer'. Meanwhile, man, in his need for the sacred, and for tangible and visible expressions of spirit, consecrates and sanctifies parts of the 'sinful world' by treating the state, nation, family, property, society, culture or civilization as inviolate. These, however, are all only symbols; it is the human being herself who is sacred - her holiness, her creativeness, freedom, love, fraternity, knowledge and beauty of soul (op. cit.:66). In our secularised society, we still need moments, like a coronation service, when the spiritual character of our corporate life is acknowledged.

Berdyaev claims that we too often objectify the spirit in formal academic study. This 'propounds methods of dealing with the object, but fails to apprehend the reality' (op. cit.:64). One might cite the formal analysis of a symphony, which cannot convey the existential impact of that work, although I would argue that it can lead to a

deeper appreciation of it. He says that, although the 'historical and cultural world is nearer to the existential subject than the natural world of physico-mathematical science', it is never the less an objectified world, unless we deliberately look beyond the outward symbols to the reality behind (op. cit.:68).

It is part of Berdyaev's vision that the modern world of technology, science and economics, accused by some of being contrary to the world of spirit, can in fact be its manifestation.

Science is part of humanity's long journey from the darkness of ignorance, from bondage to magic and primitive myth, and to spirits and demons of nature, towards the light of knowledge and understanding. Although 'the modern spirit still suffers from fear of the light' - the true light of spirit (Lowrie 1965:65), science 'seeks truth: in it, Logos is reflected' (RS:32). Science is also

man's reaction for self preservation...for this protective orientation man must bring himself into correspondence with the realities of the world ... science is a highly perfected means of adaptation to the given world, and knowledge (grows) out of necessity (Lowrie 1965:326).

But it has its limitations; 'it makes its own reality', dealing with only part of the truth, whilst philosophy and religion set up quite different realities (MCA:27). So 'there are questions which it not only cannot solve, but may not even put' (RS:32). In particular, it cannot prove that there is no God, any more than it can prove that there is a God; in this area, arguments from the natural sciences, which are as weak for God as against God, may be entirely ignored (TR:96). Because the sciences work by dividing the world up into manageable areas, they do not see the world as a whole, nor can they grasp its meaning (DM:8) - indeed many scientists seem to think that the world has no meaning at all.

I regard the great scientific theories, such as Newton's equations of gravitation, Darwin's understanding of evolution and Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, as manifestations of spirit breaking through into the natural world. They are the fruit of creativity in a Berdyaevian sense, involving much mental struggle, but also of moments of revelation reminiscent of religious inspiration. A clear example of this is when Frederick Kekule (1829-96) had dreams which revealed to him the atomic structures of carbon compounds (Carey 1995:138). Further, the great theories display an aesthetic quality, so that Paul Dirac (1902-84) said 'It is more important to have beauty in one's equations than to have them fit experiment' - discrepancies may be cleared up later (Ferguson 1995:60).

Technics, to use Berdyaev's word, is an expression of man's creativity, and therefore of spirit (SR:69). New objects and new possibilities are brought into

existence, whose conception cannot be fully explained by what has gone before - they are manifestations of freedom, of creation out of nothing. Berdyaev goes as far as suggesting that the machine belongs to a new category of existence; it is not organic, but neither is it just material.

Technics reveals a new degree of actuality, and this is the work of man, a result of the breakthrough of spirit into nature and the installation of reason in elemental processes.

So man's adaptation to the problems of the new world which he is creating must occur first in spiritual experience (Lowrie 1965:62).

However, as the basis of the scientific method is the objectification of the material world, this industrialised world which grows out of science can itself be an extreme form of objectification. It can have fatal effects upon man's emotional life, turning the human body into an instrument, and reducing the human person into an agent of production or a 'consumer', so limiting the human spirit. Civilization has developed gigantic technical forces, preparing the way for man's complete reign over nature; but man only partially understands the nature of these forces, and so they lord it over man, make him their slave, and kill his spirit (MCA:292).

The majority of Christians regard technics as spiritually neutral (Lowrie 1965:61); it multiplies the good things of life, offering new perfections which we can all enjoy. Others experience technics apocalyptically; they are terrified at its increasing power over human lives. They have every cause to be fearful - 'it could lead to the destruction of the greater part of mankind - may even lead to cosmic catastrophe' (op. cit.:327). However, both attitudes are wrong, the one growing out of fear, the other failing to see the problem. Man is in danger of becoming enslaved by technics, because his spiritual and moral growth has not kept pace with his technological developments. 'It is only by means of the spiritual element, which is man's relationship to God, (that) man can become independent and free himself from the necessity of nature and the power of technics'. Spiritual development does not necessitate that humankind turn away from nature and technics, but rather that we exercise full command over them.

The field of economics has also often been assumed to have little to do with the spiritual.

Spirituality was relegated to a special sphere where it had no concern with the problems of labour or that of man's physical necessities. The operative solution paid no heed to spirituality and was in fact opposed to it ... (and so) cannot achieve a whole humanity (SR:179).

As Peter Heslam has recently argued (2003:12), the prevailing view is not so much that society *has* markets, but that it *constitutes* a market. Further, it is assumed that this market is 'governed by laws of nature and functions like a machine to ensure economic stability or "equilibrium"'. This is what Berdyaev means by the

'objectification' of economics, and what Marx called the abstraction of labour in capitalist society (SR:178). In his early writings, which greatly influenced the young Berdyaev, Karl Marx passionately attacked capitalism because he saw in it 'the transformation of man into a thing'. So he demands

that everything should be examined not only objectively, as a thing, but also subjectively as a human activity, and he sees in economics the activity of man, and the relations of men among themselves ... Capital, for example, is the relation between men in production and not a material reality exterior to man.

So it is within man's power to overcome the so-called unavoidable laws of economics and thus modify the structure of society (TNE:19). Indeed, Berdyaev claims, we should regard labour as a form of asceticism, a technical and constructive achievement, a sacrifice, a struggle, a penetration of cosmic life, and also as a form of association, and of communication between men. Work then is deeply related to spirituality, and makes spirituality more whole - a Benedictine insight (SR:180).

For Berdyaev, there are two contrary economic symbols - money and bread. Money is economics objectified, bread is economics spiritualised (op. cit.:178). Money has become the measure of all things in a despiritualised world, which has lost all notion of freedom, purpose, creativeness and love; we must overthrow the power of money, and establish the rule of bread, of authentic existence, of the reality of living people, and the provision of what it required by them to lead a full life (op. cit.:178). Sergi Bulgakov had written in 1903 that there is a

victory to be won over matter, and the spiritualising of the forces of nature ... The hungry man needs food above all else, the old need clothes, the homeless shelter. Poverty creates the kind of suffering that degrades man and excludes the possibility of proper human and spiritual life ... The triumphs of technology are nothing but the spiritualising of matter, the annihilation of matter simply as such - the subordination of matter to the goals of the human spirit ... the greatness of a nation's wealth, the success of technology and industry, these are the expression of a gradual spiritualisation of matter (Williams 1999:42f).

The material domination of human life is the result of the divorce between the spiritual and the rest of life (SR:177f), and the recognition that the fields of social life, science, of technics and of economics are parts of the realm of spirit is an insight which we need to urgently reclaim. To do so would be a direct working out of the implications of Berdyaev's philosophy of spirit.

DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL AWARENESS.

An awareness of spirit within this objectivised world must be developed

'in rather the same way as we cultivate an aesthetic sensibility' (Armstrong 2001:24). At least three things are necessary; a joining with others who are already part of the spiritual tradition, a discipline, and the realisation that growth in spiritual sensitivity is a process of gradual development, rather than of instant recognition.

Firstly, the person seeking spiritual life must join those who already part of the ongoing tradition of spiritual awareness. 'The isolated individual cannot know, or even commence, the spiritual life' (FS:11,19).

Like his contemporary, the English thinker, writer and spiritual director, Evelyn Underhill (Williams 1943:12), Berdyaev's first steps towards Christianity were taken within a group engaged in exploring spiritual realities outside of the Christian tradition. Many today are taking a similar route. Since the second world war, whilst there has been a sharp decline in the membership of mainline churches, there has also been in British society 'a significant expansion in the number and range of religious groups and movements' (Parsons 1993:277). Authors such as Fritjof Capra (1975) and Ken Wilber (1996) have become best sellers because they appear to reconcile the Eastern spiritual traditions with the findings of science. Berdyaev's attitude to what we now call 'New Age' faiths is both appreciative and critical (MCA:301-317); this is perhaps the most constructive approach for the church to take today, leaving the door open for seekers to join. The autobiographical words of Bishop David Jenkins well express the position in which Berdyaev found himself; 'the community of faith is essential to the existence and sustenance of my own faith', but 'as a collective class, people who make such admissions (of their belief in the Divine) are the principle obstacles to believing in God' (2002:4,78). Eventually he had found the reality of spirit amongst them.

Secondly, the discernment of spirit grows out of a discipline. In Berdyaev's words,

The road to the higher levels of spirituality and spiritual freedom is an arduous one, for it is that of purification and creative inspiration which involves an asceticism and sacrifice which is not only individual but more than individual, being in fact both historic and social (FS:48).

In Greek, he reminds us, asceticism, means 'exercise'. In this sense it is required of the athlete, of those who make technical discoveries, explorers and revolutionaries, as well as the religious. Its aim is to strengthen the will power, so that man is not the slave of himself, his baser nature, or of his environment (SR:73f). For the Christian, asceticism need not be the renunciation of the world, as matter is not evil; spirit can triumph over the objectified material world without at the same time being disincarnated. Rather, asceticism is a concentration of strength in the body as an instrument of spirit rather than the mortification or neglect of it (op. cit.:77f). Asceticism is

a struggle against our servitude to sin, not against the passions; sin is best overcome through the awakening of love, knowledge and creativity, through an aspiration towards the beautiful, noble and the sublime (op. cit.:78f). Indeed, the Holy Fathers said that virtue is created of the same material as the passions, and that for every passion, a corresponding virtue must be formed (op. cit.:95).

Asceticism, which is man's own effort, is not enough; mysticism is in some measure also required, and is a gift of Divine grace.

The pneuma, like the breath of evening wind, blows upon man and transforms him ... through asceticism man ascends to God, but in mysticism, God reveals Himself in man (p. cit:91).

Asceticism prepares us to receive this charism.

As so often practised, asceticism is individualistic, whereas the Gospel is social. (op. cit.:81). 'Man remains a closed monad, seeking his own salvation. But man is not a monad, but a microcosm'. Even love has been interpreted as an ascetic principle leading to personal salvation, instead of as a real way of transcending self. What is needed today is a new kind of asceticism which will educate man in communion and fraternity, a discipline in which he is creatively active in the world as well as being free from it. In fact, the non-ascetic may in principle lead a more ascetic life than the professed ascetic, by taking upon himself the burden of this complex created world, human and divine, and sharing its destiny (op. cit.:81). Berdyaev suggests that in this age of consumerism, the asceticism which is needed is one

of concentration, of renunciation, of a limitation of growing necessities and of their infinite longing, one which will lead to the achievement of simplicity or wholeness, of freedom from complexity and disintegration (op. cit.:98).

Thirdly, Berdyaev recognises that there is development within the spiritual life. 'Spirit is revealed by degrees, in stages; it is not disclosed all at once nor does man at once find a place for it in himself' (TR:143).

He suggests that there are three stages. The first is 'objective religion', which, he says is both popular and collective, natural and social. This is the stage of learning about spiritual things from other people, from the church or family, school or society generally. The second is a subjective stage, which is individualistic and psycho-spiritual, in which we begin to question, explore, and make these insights our own. The third stage is 'the transcending of the opposition between the objective and subjective', and the attainment of the highest degree of spirituality, as we begin to directly enter into the experience of spiritual realities (FS:xf).

This pattern is similar to that suggested by his contemporary, the great spiritual director Baron Friedrich von Hügel (1852-1925). He too recognised three

stages, corresponding with the natural stages of childhood, teenage and adulthood (Hughes 1985:11). They are:- (a) The institutional stage, when our faith is secondhand, the faith of our parents and of the church and society. Some people stay at this stage for the whole of their lives, and are content with it. (b) A questioning stage, when we begin to doubt, to rebel, and perhaps to reject; this is individualistic, refusing to go along any more with family and social assumptions; this often takes the form of intellectual questioning. (c) The mystical stage, when our faith gradually becomes personal experience, and, in Berdyaev's language, we transcend the opposition between the objective faith, which was 'out there' and also the subjective phase of our own growing self awareness, enabling the spiritual world to become a lived reality.

Both Berdyaev and von Hugel were writing in societies which were still, at least nominally, Christian. Nowadays, as Bishop David Jenkins has recognised, 'the wistful, the atheist and the largely indifferent constitute the majority of our neighbours' (2002:30). The first stage may therefore in fact be one of institutionalised disbelief, as our culture increasingly pressurises us to reject any notion of the spiritual. The second stage may be where many people remain, wanting, but not daring, to believe. The third stage is where some seem to begin, when an awakening of the spirit, often in a non-christian context, encourages them to begin an unexpected journey. In practice, these are not so much stages as attitudes to which we continually return; the spiritual journey is an upwards spiral rather than a straight ascent.

IV. IS BERDYAEV'S PHILOSOPHY STILL OF VALUE TODAY?

In the half century since Berdyaev's death, our thinking has moved on. What critique might we now make of his thought?

Berdyaev' style.

For the Western reader, a first encounter with Berdyaev's writings can be rather disconcerting. Firstly, the subject matter is not what one would expect of a philosopher. As in all Russian religious philosophers, there are in these writings

the presence of beliefs, ideas and themes which any one accustomed to the distinction between philosophy on the one hand and Christian theology on the other, would classify as pertaining to theology (Copleston 1988:vii).

Faud Nucho recognises that Berdyaev's approach is similar to that of the Greeks, whose philosophy had a strong religious sentiment, and he compares both his style and subject matter to that of the early Fathers. Berdyaev, he says, 'approached reality through both the revelation of faith and the speculation of reason', leading much of the time to an uneasy truce between the two (1967:179ff). Berdyaev himself recognises that the roots of his philosophy were his faith and Christian experience (DR:301); he was following in the tradition established by Solovyev. Perhaps, as Frederick Copleston suggests, it is best to think of him as a creative religious thinker.

Secondly, his manner of writing is unusual. Colin Chant describes his 'unsystematic and inspirational approach, and aphoristic and paradoxical style', full of repetition (1996:63), although, surprisingly, Paul Valliere considers his books to be 'concise and translatable' (2000:1). His writings reflect the manner of their creation, being produced in great charismatic bursts of energy. He says of himself that his thinking was 'intuitive and aphoristic, rather than discursive and systematic'. His thought flowed so fast that 'I hardly have time to write it down'. At times, he sees himself as a myth maker and prophet rather than a philosopher, with a vocation 'to proclaim not a doctrine but a vision'. He compares himself with Nietzsche, speaking of the place of 'creative ecstasy, vision and prophesy in man's endeavour to comprehend reality', 'a pledge of the living reality of God and man' (DR:81,100, 219, 289).

I suggest that one of the reasons for his repetition was that he saw his topics as a whole. His ideas seem to be interrelated in complicated three-dimensional patterns, and can only be understood in context with one another. Hence his need to revisit them over and over again, exploring the relationships along many different routes, seeing them afresh each time. This makes a linear, logical analysis and indexing of his thought difficult. However, as the mention of Nietzsche reminds us, philosophy comes in

many different forms, and there are times when Berdyaev's work manifests great aesthetic and spiritual beauty, with insights which are still pertinent today.

Berdyaev's Existentialism.

Existentialism is out of fashion today, because it has some deficiencies.

A charge sometimes made against existentialist philosophy in general, to which Berdyaev's philosophy is vulnerable, is that it is irrational (Macquarrie 1973:220). Surely, it is claimed, philosophers must be objective, rational, detached, critical, analytical, free from partisan bias, and devoted to truth for truth's sake. The existentialist's call for passionate participation, unless kept very carefully under control, can conflict with the philosopher's obligation to reasonableness. Certainly Berdyaev is passionate, and at times partisan and witheringly critical of those with whom he disagrees, but this is because of his devotion to truth for truth's sake, as he sees it. He bows to neither church nor state, popular opinion nor intellectual fashion in his proclamation of what he sees to be right.

Let me make some defence of the existential 'irrationality'. Firstly, there is no such thing as a detached rational philosopher; as Berdyaev realised, we philosophise with the whole of our being, bringing assumptions and motivations shaped over the years to our work. At least Berdyaev acknowledges where he is coming from. Again, as Macquarrie points out, the danger is not so much that of our being irrational, as we often are in making our most important decisions, but of being anti-rational, an attitude which can be destructive of all that is of value in society. Berdyaev is certainly not this.

Thirdly, R. G. Olson (1962:97) says that one is a rationalist if (a) one believes that there exists some method by which we can know those things which it is humanly desirable to know; (b) one has the ability to adjust or accommodate to the realities of life; and (c) if there is an acceptance of the laws of logic. I would want to argue (a) that the methods used by existentialists and adopted by Berdyaev, teach us much about the human condition which is of immense value to our self understanding; (b) that Berdyaev is more sensitive to the realities of existence than many of us; and (c) that he is not illogical, although he acknowledges the limits of logical argument, and is not afraid of contradiction if paradox is the best way of communicating the truth (DR:305).

Finally, Professor John E. Smith (1979:57ff) points out that the tests of rationality are not the same for all forms of knowledge; 'The only legitimate comparisons are those made between systems of discourse of the same logical type'. For him, the kind of reason which is applicable to religion is to be conceived as 'a living power of understanding and intelligibility operating within the streams of experience which

constitute the lives of individual persons', and so existentialism is one of the possible candidates for providing a suitable philosophical basis for religious discourse.

There is a second charge against existentialism; it risks becoming too subjective. Consider, for example, Berdyaev's ideas about revelation. George Stroup (1994:116) says that theologians regard revelation as having an objective element - what is revealed, and also a subjective element - how revelation is received. The objective may be in the form of a set of propositions, of the infallible teaching of scripture, or of the tradition of the church, or of the word of God as revealed in the life of Jesus Christ in history. The subjective element is the personal reception of the revelation, which otherwise would remain powerless in our lives. As we have seen, Berdyaev, with his fear of objectivisation, and sense of the importance of mysticism, takes a highly subjective approach to revelation. Revelation in his view is revealed to us directly in our inner being, and there are no external criteria. Scripture, tradition, even the historic Christ appear to play only a minor part in his thinking, and he regards their authority as being itself subjective. However, there is then a danger, which Berdyaev does not always avoid, of believing what we want to believe, and of going off into flights of fancy, not least because we each have differing and firmly held ideas about what God is revealing to us personally.

Fifty years ago, George Seaver could write 'Berdyaev ... established faith on the rock of personal experience' (1950:14). That rock no longer exists. G. Pattinson has pointed out that in post-modernism critiques, 'experience, no less than reason, is problematised within religious existentialism under the impact of a radically historised understanding of the human condition' (1999:268,272). Religious experience and its interpretation are shaped and coloured by the culture within which the experience occurs. This does not mean that such experience is to be dismissed; it may reflect a real encounter with spirit, and convey genuine insights, but, like other sources of knowledge, it must be tested. 'Experience cannot be elevated above the process of decision, action and interpretation that provides the actual matrix of all determination of meaning' (ibid). Berdyaev does overstate his case about the importance of the subjective approach to truth; mysticism is no more infallible than any other source of knowledge. He was culturally conditioned by the need to counter philosophies which absolutised rationalism, and which denied the validity of any religious or mystical experience, and we must read him in this light.

Berdyaev's subjectivism is balanced by his great emphasis upon *sobornost*, and the discernment of truth by the spirit-filled Christian community. Scripture, tradition, dogma have authority because the fellowship of believers have recognised their worth. He would always want to submit his ideas and insights to the judgement of the mind of the whole community, be that the church or his academic

colleagues. Further, he would surely agree with H..H. Farmer, that whilst truth 'shines in its own light', it also works in the sense of satisfying our nature, of helping in the practical task of managing the world, and also reveals, under the critical examination to which Berdyaev subjected his ideas, both an internal consistency and a harmony with other experience and knowledge (1942:28)

This emphasis upon community is all of a piece with Berdyaev's particular approach to existentialism. He differed from Søren Kierkegaard and Jean Paul Sartre, who focused upon the individual. For him, as for Buber and for Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973), 'the reality of personal existence....came about through man's 'engagement' of himself to communal life and to God' (Richmond 1983:202). Berdyaev therefore speaks of a 'personalist philosophy' which is not subjectivist, individualistic, empirical or nominalist, and which discovers 'the authentic real behind the superficial semblance of the general'. Just as we only become full persons in relationship with others, so knowledge itself is a shared activity, and overcomes human isolation (SS:33).

One final comment about existentialism. Berdyaev emphasised that the scientific methods which dominate modern thinking cannot give a full account of every human experience, and in saying this he is far from being alone. I will refer to just one other philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951). He wrote his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in order, like Kant, to fix the nature and limits of scientific knowledge, and regarded values and the meaning of life as being beyond its scope. Therefore

any attempt to theorise about religion and morality and any attempt to do speculative metaphysics must fail, because it represents our beliefs in those spheres as being of a factual kind - which they are not.

This does not mean that they are not real. Wittgenstein seems to have believed in God, and talks of God being constantly with him. For him, the 'truths' of religion cannot be put into words - they must be shown indirectly by act, and felt and done by the individual (Cupitt 1984:217). However, Berdyaev and many others do want to put religious 'truths' into words, and the existential methods provide a way of doing this, because they give priority to the existent who is 'acting', 'feeling' and 'doing'.

Ungrund.

Berdyaev is often criticized for his use of Boehme's concept of *Ungrund*, the 'Nothing' which in its very nothingness is 'a search for Something' (Erb 1978:18). J. W. Dye, regards it as Berdyaev's basic notion, from which he develops his ideas of freedom, of God as 'the initial creative, purposeful act, determining the pure possibility' or potential dormant within the *ungrund*, and of spirit as creative process (1967:286f). On the other hand, Evgueny Lampart, and some other commentators, consider the idea of

uncreated freedom with which the concept is linked, to be Berdyaev's 'most disastrous conclusion' (Nucho 1966:169).'

Berdyaev uses the idea of *ungrund* when trying to make some rational sense of problems which arises in two related contexts. The first, as we have seen, is that of freedom. Man is free only if his freedom is determined neither by the natural world nor by God, and, he suggests, this points to the existence of a source which was prior to both. Secondly, Berdyaev, like Dostoyevsky, could not believe that God is in any way responsible for evil (Lowrie 1960:116). So, writing in the magazine *Put* in 1929, Berdyaev describes the *ungrund* as

the primal, irrational, dark, and undetermined freedom. It is not itself evil, but makes evil possible; it comprises potentiality of evil as well as good....It lies outside God, outside of being, is pre-existent to all being which is already determined (op. cit.:119).

Taken as rational ontological statements, these descriptions of *ungrund* do not make sense. They imply that God has a beginning and is Himself part of the realm of the spirit, rather than its source. Further, it seems to suggest that the 'nothing' out of which God, in Christian theology, created the world is in fact a 'something' (Burnaby 1938:231), and thirdly, that there is a dualism between good and evil. For Christian thinking, this can not be true, for 'God is the "presence" to which all reality is present' (Williams 2002:23), he is the reality who contains all other realities, and who is greater than them all together.

However, as Nucio points out (1967:175), we are perhaps not intended to take the idea of *ungrund* as being ontologically true. After all, Boehme himself was not putting forward a rational argument, but attempting to describe direct intuitive visions (Lowrie 1960:118). Berdyaev himself regards "uncreated freedom" as 'a limiting notion, describing symbolically a reality which does not lend itself to logical definition' (DR:288). It is the noetic abyss, John Macquarrie suggests, which we all glimpse when we experience intense anxiety in the face of our freedom to choose - *ungrund* is an existential reality (1973:139).

In other places, Berdyaev says that 'the origin of man's freedom is in God, man's freedom being the same source as his life'. Indeed, man's freedom arises from his having been made in the image of God; it presupposes the possibility of his divinisation, a possibility which he is free to reject (FS:131f). As to the problem of evil, Berdyaev says that 'the problem of theodicy remains unsolved. All rational solutions.....are bankrupt'. We must remember that 'the last words of Jesus were 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?' (TR:91). He considers that the problem of theodicy can 'only be solved on the existential plane where God reveals Himself as freedom, love, and sacrifice, where He suffers for man and strives together with man against the intolerable suffering of the world' (SF:89). The crucified God is the only

Christian answer in the end. For Berdyaev, evil is not so much an obstacle to faith, as a proof of God's existence, 'a challenge to turn towards that in which love triumphs over hatred, union over division, eternal life over death' (Calian 1986:53).

Berdyaev turned to the idea of *ungrund* to provide some kind of explanation for two very difficult problems. I do not regard it as a key concept in his philosophy of spirit.

Berdyaev as an Orthodox christian.

Back in the 1940s and '50's, when his books were being widely read in English translation, Berdyaev was often regarded as a spokesman for Orthodoxy, a position which both he and the Russian church found embarrassing, as some of his views raised the eyebrows of fellow believers. Yet, as I hope I have shown, Orthodox ideas such as *sobornost* and Godmanhood are key to his philosophy, and at times he expresses himself in very orthodox ways. I give just one example. Here is part of Alexander Schmemmann's account of the nature of symbol.

... the world is symbolical ... in virtue of its being created by God; to be "symbolical" belongs thus to its ontology, the symbol being not only the way to perceive and understand reality, a means of cognition, but also a means of participation (1973:139).

The similarity with Berdaev is apparent.

Berdyaev's philosophy grew out of a part of the Russian School of theology which, in Paul Valliere's words, 'grappled with the challenges facing all faith communities in modern times, such as the tension between tradition and freedom, the challenge of modern humanism, the mission of the church to modern society, the status of dogma in modern intellectuality, and the significance of religious pluralism' (2000:43). As such, he is a counterbalance to the Neo-patristic school of writers like V. Lossky, who so dominate our image of Orthodox thinking. John Binns writes (2002:250), that there is in Orthodoxy a 'strong and determined conservative and traditional majority', but there is also an open and progressive minority, about we do not often hear. Berdyaev is a representative of this group. The Dutch priest Fr. Alexis Voogd bears witness that Berdyaev, by his search for a new understanding of Orthodoxy, helped a number of his contemporaries to find faith (Forest 2003:34). An openness like his is still needed today. Whilst traditional Orthodoxy attracts Western converts at the moment, in the long run it will only remain relevant if it learns to take the modern world seriously.

Berdyaev's philosophy compared with some other accounts.

I want now to assess the distinctiveness of Berdyaev's account of the nature of spirit by making some comparisons.

We have already seen strong similarities between Berdyaev and Buber. At first sight, Buber seems to be the more accessible. We can immediately relate to his distinction between *I-It* and *I-Thou* relationships, and here is a language which can be used, for example, in a sermon. In contrast, Berdyaev's technical philosophical terminology appears to be far removed from our ordinary ways of thinking. However, although he never expresses it, it seems to me that his philosophy also is based upon experiences which we all share. We have all known times when, often after much effort, the 'penny drops', and we suddenly see the truth in a way which is beyond the operation of our reason. We all have moments of intuitive insight, although the more rational amongst us may minimize their significance. However briefly, we have felt in touch with a reality beyond ourselves (Hardy 1979:1), perhaps at times of birth or of death, or the sight of the night sky or a superb sunset. We have all experienced the reality of an intense relationship, and of deep communion with another person. Further, although we may not have analysed it, we are well aware of the difference between 'subject' and 'object'. All of this forms the raw material for his philosophy, and is, I would claim, as equally communicable as Buber's thought. Further, perhaps Buber's articulation of spirit is too personalistic. 'Spirit' and 'God' are not simply 'Thou', even though we experience them in a personal way. They are more than this, beyond the personal, and we need the width of vocabulary employed by Berdyaev when pointing towards their reality.

Another existential theologian was Paul Tillich (1886-1965). What he writes about the spirit closely parallels Berdyaev's thought. For him, the full content of the word 'spirit', which is derived from *νοῦς* as well as *πνεῦμα*, is expressed through both the cognitive function of the mind and also the emotion and will. Spirit is meaning and it is power. He agrees therefore with Berdyaev that spirit is manifested in man, because only in him is there the actualisation of power and meaning in unity (1964:118). For him also, spirit is not in contrast with body, but life in the spirit transcends the triplicity of body, soul and mind (1953:276). However, in contrast with Berdyaev, he speaks of spirit as a 'dimension' of existence (1964:15f). He prefers this term to 'levels' of existence, because the latter term gives an impression of separation and of a hierarchy. Rather, all dimensions of existence - matter, life, mind and reason - are present together at the one point, waiting to appear when the conditions are right. Although this image of 'spirit' has its value, 'dimension' is too impersonal a term, and I cannot imagine Berdyaev using it.

Berdyaev himself says on more than one occasion that his philosophy is close to Indian thought. For example, he suggests that in Kant's philosophy, 'the scientifically knowable phenomenal world also is itself an illusory world as the philosophy of the Upanishads recognizes' (BE:14). Further, his thinking is at times close to the idea

of the union of *Brahman* and *Atman*. *Brahman* is a Holy Power, existing behind the multitude of phenomena; *Atman* is the innermost essence of each individual, 'the eternal, in its purity, lying within man'. Through ascetic practice, the *Atman* and the *Brahman* become equated - 'the self within and the Holy Power sustaining and pervading the whole world are in essence one' (Smart 1971:122ff).

There are clear resonances here with Berdyaev's thought. *Brahman*, in Berdyaev's language would be described as being beyond object and subject, 'a deep lying stratum which is anterior to objectification' (TR:15), and whilst all matter is sacramental, *Brahman* is manifested most clearly in man. Man's ultimate destiny is his divinisation, to be oned with God. However, for Berdyaev there is one important difference between the two philosophies; Indian thought has no understanding of 'Godmanhood' (TR:110). In his mysticism, as in Christian mysticism generally, to become united with the Divine is not to loose one's identity, but to discover both oneself and the true nature of God. This is well expressed by the Christo-centric English mystic Julian of Norwich (1342-c1420);

What is he indeed that is maker and lover and keeper? I cannot find words to tell. For until I am one with him I can never find true rest and peace. I can never know it until I am held so close to him that there is nothing in between' (Llewelyn 1980:3).

V. CONCLUSION

I began this dissertation by asking four questions of Berdyaev. What answers have we found?

How did Berdyaev come to this sense of the priority of spirit?

Despite being a rebel, Berdyaev was very much a child of his time and of his Russian inheritance. In him there was a meeting of the riches of Russian Orthodoxy, and of the anguish of Western existentialism. The West could not have produced such a thinker, and for this reason an encounter with his writings is both challenging and refreshing. There is one key factor; he had been given a particular gift of spiritual awareness. He says of himself,

I am naturally endowed with a consciousness, however dim and inarticulate, that reality is not, and cannot be exhausted by the external world which forces itself upon us: that we are not fixed in a permanent position within a crude and self sufficient universe, that we dwell in the midst of mystery' (DR:170).

Just as there are those with a natural talent in music or art, in science or engineering, in sport or in intellectual pursuits, in practical or in caring skills, so there are those who are naturally sensitive in the things of the spirit. Perhaps relatively few have this particular genius; this fact does not invalidate their insights, any more than the fact that few of us, even with some scientific background, can share the vision of Stephen Hawking invalidates the strange truth as he has come to see it. The whole community is enriched by these outstanding men and women; indeed, the fact that such towering souls break into the mundaneness of human life is itself a sign of the reality of spirit. Spiritual giants are given no privileges here on earth, and I doubt if they receive any in the Kingdom of Heaven, but we are all enriched by their wisdom.

How did Berdyaev verbalise the reality of spirit philosophically?

I have already summarised his ideas at the end of Part II, and there is no need to repeat this. I just add two brief comments.

Berdyaev is a dualist, seeing a sharp distinction between the world of spirit, 'which is reality, subjectively grasped, free creative and dynamic' and the objective world 'a kind of congealed world which is phenomenal only' (Macquarrie 1963:204). So although there is distinction, there is not opposition. Berdyaev, like other Russian philosophers, looks forward to the coming of the Kingdom of God when the objectified order comes to an end, and is transformed into the spiritual order (ibid).

His writings remind us of the care with which we must talk about spirit. It is not a 'thing'; we cannot put 'the' in front of this word. Just as we cannot say what 'gravity' is, but only describe what it does, so we can not describe what spirit is, but only

how we experience spirit. A sense of the reality of spirit is an existential rather than an intellectual conviction - it is reality itself. But neither can we convey the experience of spirit in purely personal terms - spirit is supra-personal, in Berdyaev's language beyond the objective and the subjective. We know spirit by being within its flow, and becoming aware of the movement of spirit within us, and learning to recognise its elusive but real presence in the whole cosmos.

Can Berdyaev help us to find ways in which we and others might grow in awareness of the spiritual realm today?

I have been particularly struck by Berdyaev's warnings against the dangers of objectifying spirit, by his insistence that we can be aware of spirit in the whole of life, including those parts we label as being 'secular', and his stress upon the need to develop an asceticism which is open to the needs and possibilities of the world. There are resonances here with liberation theology, which was also influenced by Karl Marx. In particular, Berdyaev's warnings about the limitations of capitalism (eg ET:91f), whilst beyond the parameters of this dissertation, are all of a piece with his philosophy of spirit, and have not lost their relevance.

Not least, Berdyaev's experience of faith has contemporary resonances. All his life he remained loyal to his church and to the Patriarchate of Moscow, but his role was as a member of the 'loyal opposition', continuing violent verbal attacks on the shortcomings of the hierarchy (Lowrie 1960:131). Nor did faith become any easier for him. E. Lampert's assessment is this,

To Berdyaev applies what Dostoevsky said of himself: "It is not as a child that I believe and confess Christ Jesus. My 'hosanna' is born of a furnace of doubt". And Berdyaev's merit lies in that he is one of the few who have found the Christian answer, and yet do not cease to question with those whose lives are still torn asunder by disbelief, doubt and sufferings; one of the few who dare to be, as thinkers, Christians, and, as *Christians, thinkers* (n.d.:96).

This, I suspect, is where many of us are today; Berdyaev's example encourages us to continue in our journey of discovery.

Is Berdyaev's philosophy still of value today?

Although, as we have seen, Berdyaev's existential approach to the philosophy of spirit is not without its problems, it seems to me that it remains of value.

Firstly, he stresses the importance of focusing upon the human person, through whom spirit is revealed. As David Jenkins has written,

The real question is whether atheism, rigorously adopted and applied, is a necessary, sufficient and worthy approach to the most amazing existence so far known to us to have emerged in this universe. Human beings ... are a mystery worthy of further investigation and reflection (2002:6).

There are human qualities, such as the sense of freedom, of creativity, of a search for meaning and of an intimation of things beyond the purely material, which cannot be easily explained in purely material terms, qualities which belong to the world of spirit.

Secondly, Berdyaev

conceived of life, not as a problem to be solved but as a reality to be experienced ... Not the world of things, but the concrete human experience (of the ultimate issues of life and death) constitutes the heart of his philosophical concern (Nucho 1967:190).

Although experience must be critiqued, we will never come to a sense of the reality of spirit by purely rational means.

It is impossible to think of God in rational terms, which are always borrowed from this world, which is not like God ... God is not being, God is Spirit. God is not essence but existence (RS:36).

As he is fond of saying, we worship not the God of the philosophers, but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel; an encounter with such a God is always dramatic.

Further, his existentialism encourages us to ask the right questions. He wrote of the Russian Orthodoxy of the early years of the twentieth century, that the church

cannot cope with (modern man's) religious tragedy; it is always answering questions which have not been asked; it soothes the wrong suffering, heals the wrong wounds; it is helping to save men from childish sins, but is powerless to help with the sins of maturity; it does not want to know anything new in man.

He looks forward to a church which is

open to mature man, convulsed in religious torment, the boundless, measureless freedom of creativity in the Spirit, the multiplicity of individual ways in God' (MCA:333).

Similarly, Paul Tillich said,

The churches believed they had all the answers. But in believing that they had the answers they deprived the answers of their meaning. These answers were no longer understood because the questions were no longer understood, and this was the church's fault ... They did not ask the questions over again as they should have out of the despair in industrial society.

Tillich felt that the existentialists were asking the right questions, to which the Christian faith indeed has the answers when it approaches them in humility (1989:101). The church of today still puts much energy into discussing matters about which most people are not concerned, and although Berdyaev's particular concerns may not always be relevant today, he continually challenges to assess our priorities.

In short, any successful philosophy of spirit must, I suggest, use a methodology similar to that of existentialism, and Berdyaev offers us a significant

example. Moreover, he does not use existentialist language merely as a way of articulating the Christian faith in the modern world, nor, as does John Macquarrie in his *Principles of Christian Theology*, assume the existentialist ontology as a 'result', as a basis for theological reconstruction (Pattison (1999:262f); rather, Berdyaev uses the existentialist method as a way of critiquing the foundations of theology itself.

Nicolas Alexandrovich Berdyaev has not provided us with any 'knock-down' arguments for the reality of spirit, for there can not be any. Rather, as when walking with a naturalist to search for the shy natural life which is abundantly present in a thick wood, he has shown us where and how to look for the ever elusive, but all pervading, spirit, and given hints about what is demanded of those who find.

The last word belongs to him.

The fact that within me the spiritual life is born, that I seek for God, that I aspire to the divine, and that I love God in this life, is of all facts the most important and is the very justification of existence. No power on earth can persuade me that that is an illusion, a product of autosuggestion and not life itself. For in truth it is the only life, without which all is but dust and phantasy. We do not live in a real world, but in a world where existence and non-existence are confused, and our spiritual awakening is an awakening to true existence' (FS:49f).

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